University Of Alberta

A Study Of Six Student Teachers' Planning Experiences In The Practicum

by

Annabella Maria Branco

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor Of Philosophy

Department of Elementary Education

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how six female elementary student teachers experienced planning in a three-month practicum, how their approaches to planning changed during the practicum, and what contributed to or influenced their approaches to planning. The six student teachers were part of a cohort assigned to three elementary schools to complete their term practicum from September through to December 1995. Throughout the twelve week practicum, the researcher observed each student teacher weekly teach a lesson and conducted pre- and post-interviews regarding the lesson observed. Other data for the study included interviews with cooperating teachers; student teachers' documents such as lesson plans, unit plans, planning books, and reflection journals; and interviews and completed assignments from the academic year prior to the practicum.

In spite of previously held student-centered orientations, the student teachers began the practicum with a Tylerian perspective on planning. Over the course of the practicum, the student teachers' changing preoccupations reflected their growth in teaching and planning. Entry preoccupations included the desire to be provided with resources and concrete models of planning, the view that cooperating teachers were a major source of teaching knowledge and expertise, and the hope that there would be support and guidance. Early and mid-practicum concerns included classroom management, pacing of lessons, correcting assumptions about students' prior knowledge, student assessment, and limited subject matter knowledge. Later preoccupations included search for coherent and meaningful student assessment approaches, selecting

materials and resources that best met the needs and interests of students, and use of students' responses to guide future planning of lessons.

Other findings included discovering that teaching at the beginning of the practicum could be high-risk ventures for some student teachers; student teachers' frustration and challenges when trying to assess students contributed significantantly to their growth; experiencing unexpected events in the classroom interacted with student teachers' styles or strengths to shape the direction of their development as teachers; and student teachers' changing concerns about materials and resources mirrored their growth as teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Good company in a journey makes the way to seem shorter.
Izaak Walton

The journey that I undertook to complete this thesis would not have been possible without the encouragement and support of those individuals who had faith in my ability to bring these experiences to fruition. I wish to express my gratitude to:

Dr. Julia Ellis for her wisdom, understanding and never-ending patience to guide my thinking towards probing deeper in my search for meaning.

The members of my committee Dr. Dave Sande, Dr. Katherine Willson, Dr. Andrea Borys, Dr. Sylvia Chard, and Dr. Bob Jackson. Their interest in my research and confidence in my abilities as a researcher provided me with confidence and inspiration to pursue my study.

My external examiner Dr. Ursula Kelly for her thoughtful and insightful questions.

The student teachers in my study without whom the study would not have otherwise been possible. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to be a witness during this important period of growth. My understanding about student teachers' planning experiences has been enriched and hopefully will enable me to better support student teachers' development in the future.

To my husband, Dennis whose love and patience made it possible for me these past 2 years to immerse myself completely in my studies.

My family and friends whose show of support and loyalty enabled me to direct all my time and energy in the pursuit of my dream.

Finally, I wish to thank Stan Calder for his diligent and conscientious efforts to ensure that my thesis was error free and professional.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The practicum offers student teachers an opportunity to develop knowledge about the many dimensions of teaching, learning, and classroom life, including classroom routines, the culture of the school, students' characteristics, teaching style, and administrative and parental expectations. As Leinhardt and Greeno (1986) contend, learning to teach is a complex cognitive skill that involves the acquisition of many types of knowledge, including classroom procedures, lesson planning, and subject matter. As student teachers engage in the process of learning to teach, cooperating teachers are in the unique position of being able to observe and support their growth (Piland & Anglin, 1993).

During the past 4 years, I have served in the roles of cooperating teacher, researcher, and university facilitator. With each experience, I have had to reconsider and revise my views about teaching and teachers' professional growth.

My interest in student teachers learning to teach came from my own experience as a cooperating teacher. I had been teaching for a number of years in both regular and special education classroom settings and felt comfortable with my teaching style and relationship with students. Therefore, when the opportunity arose to work with a student teacher, I felt confident in my ability to offer a wealth of teaching expertise and knowledge. I did not, however, anticipate how the experience as a cooperating teacher would affect me on

both a personal and professional level.

It was during that first meeting with my student teacher that I experienced a feeling of being overwhelmed with the responsiblity of having to assist him in learning about teaching. Lacking both knowledge and experience about what my role would encompass, I struggled throughout the practicum to find ways to support my student teacher's growth as a teacher. In my role as cooperating teacher, I was faced with the challenge of helping him understand the complexity of teaching. Deciding where to begin in my role as "mentor" proved to be one of my biggest challenges as a cooperating teacher. There are many aspects to teaching and I needed to choose a starting place to focus upon. The most obvious one at the time appeared to be planning, one of the primary tasks that student teachers are expected to perform in a practicum.

From our discussions, I came to realize that in my own planning I unconsciously relied on my knowledge of the students and my prior teaching experiences; whereas my student teacher, at the start of his practicum, did not have this knowledge or the classroom context to draw upon and consequently found the planning process difficult. Translating curricular expectations through planning into meaningful learning experiences requires a knowledge of classroom procedures, characteristics of the students, resources available, assessment methods, and one's own teaching style. With this in mind, I had to find ways to help him make the necessary connections among planning with what unfolded in the classroom, and its effect on other aspects of classroom life.

The Study

My own experience as a student teacher and my questions as a cooperating teacher led to my interest in researching student teachers' planning experiences and growth in teaching. Student teachers' planning can be influenced by their cooperating teachers, school culture, classroom context, teacher preparation programs, students' characteristics, and their own prior life and school experiences. I believed that a study of how student teachers proceed with and grow in planning over the duration of a practicum could provide cooperating teachers and teacher educators with valuable insight into this period of learning how to teach.

To study the planning experiences of student teachers, I worked with six female elementary student teachers in their final practicum. Conferencing with and observing six student teachers on a weekly basis for over a three month period provided me with the opportunity to better understand the various teaching challenges they faced. In following and exploring their planning and teaching experiences, I found myself undergoing a transformation in my thinking about what it means to teach. Spending such an intensive period of time with each student teacher did not leave me untouched either as a researcher or as a teacher. As I listened to the student teachers share some very personal and sometimes painful teaching experiences, I felt as if I were re-living my own experience as a student teacher. It made me appreciate even more their generosity in participating in a research study during a period in their professional development that in itself was very demanding and taxing on their

energy and emotions. On a number of occasions, I found myself taken aback by some of the student teachers' preoccupations. This served to remind me that, as they were novices, each teaching situation was a new experience to try to cope with in a competent manner.

My weekly visits with each of the six student teachers over the three month period allowed me the unique opportunity to share their professional triumphs and in some cases, disappointments and to witness the transformation in their thinking about planning and teaching. It was interesting to note that three of the student teachers, in spite of the confidence and skills they had gained during their first classroom placements, expressed anxiety and self-doubt about their teaching abilities as they prepared to change placements midway through the practicum. Fortunately, they were able to make the necessary adjustments quickly and used their knowledge of children and classroom life from their previous placement to help them to cope effectively with a different classroom context and therefore helped to alleviate their intial feelings of anxiety.

Over the course of the practicum's twelve weeks, I noticed that our relationships underwent a change as I moved from my initial position of the detached researcher seeking data on student teachers' planning experiences. I found myself re-living some of the experiences that the student teachers described and felt uncertainty and nagging self-doubt about my own ability to deal effectively with the various responsibilities involved in being a teacher. For the student teachers, our weekly conversations gave them an important

opportunity to think aloud, to reflect on their teaching experiences, and to examine how these fit in with their previous conceptions of teaching. By visiting them each week in their classrooms, I became familiar with their teaching environments (students, cooperating teachers; other staff) and came to appreciate more what these experiences were like for them. In some cases I was there when certain events took place that had a significant impact on their growth as teachers; this added to our research relationship as we shared something in common. Two student teachers told me during the last interview that they had come to regard me as having had a small part to play in their learning to teach and were grateful that our conferences provided them with a safe place to vent their frustrations, self-doubts, and concerns without fear of recrimination or judgment. It was touching to discover after the practicum was over how most of the six student teachers would deliberately pop into my office just to say hello or ask for some advice and support. One student teacher visited me on several occasions, seeking help with various course assignments. What was particularly heart-warming was the day that one student teacher who had just been short listed for a temporary teaching position came by to share her good news and to ask for advice on how best to prepare for the interview.

As I examined the student teachers' reflection paper cohort assignments, teaching philosophies, and the first interview transcriptions, I found that their views of teaching and their expectations were idealistic and perhaps a bit naive, much as other researchers (Bennett, 1991; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Guillaume & Rudney, 1993; Harrington & Riemer Sacks, 1984) had found. However, as I

spent an intensive amount of time with them during this critical period in their growth as teachers, I came to admire the way their thoughts about teaching changed to become more realistic and less focused on their own needs and concerns. It was encouraging to discover how some student teachers came to acknowledge that their journey had only begun and that there were no quick shortcuts to becoming a teacher. By the end of the practicum, I sincerely believed that each student teacher had a better understanding of what it meant to plan and to teach in the context of a classroom. The following section provides an overview of research literature which depicts the differences between experienced and inexperienced teachers' planning and describes the way that student teachers' process of planning evolves over time.

Experienced Versus Student Teacher Planning

In the literature that I examined pertaining to experienced and inexperienced teachers' planning, the following differences were highlighted: during planning experienced teachers apply their knowledge of students, teaching situations, and various instructional techniques; in contrast, student teachers' planning is based on achieving curricular objectives, applying theoretical knowledge from formal preparation courses, and recalling prior school experiences. During planning, student teachers, unlike experienced teachers, have limited knowledge of students, subject matter, procedural routines, and instructional strategies. The following section presents some of the research findings about experienced teachers' planning.

Characteristics of Experienced Teachers' Planning

There has been a considerable amount of research into experienced teacher planning (Borko & Niles, 1987; Clark & Peterson, 1986; McCutcheon, 1980; Peterson, Marx, & Clark, 1978; Zahorik, 1975). Such research has clarified that there are significant differences between the planning of experienced teachers and inexperienced ones. When experienced teachers plan, they are guided by prior teaching experience, knowledge of students, resource availability, learning principles, and the context of the classroom. Teacher planning does not take place in a vacuum; rather it evolves in a complex environment, which may heavily influence the type of planning decisions made by teachers.

A study by Clark and Elmore (1981) examined various factors that influenced teachers' planning. They found that while experienced teachers are engaged in the process of planning, they review events from the previous year, analyze satisfaction level with the previous year's teaching, review curriculum materials, make modifications to the content to be taught, and organize topics to be covered. Their knowledge of students' skills and abilities enables them to choose from among a wide array of learning tasks.

In a review of literature on teacher planning, Sardo-Brown (1993) found that experienced teachers do not follow a traditional model of planning based on an objectives-first approach. Instead, they begin planning by visualizing a set of activities. Experienced teachers plan mentally, envisioning possible outcomes and clarifying ideas. During this planning, they may consider certain

aspects of the traditional planning model but do not begin their planning with the setting of behavioral objectives.

Another theme that emerges from related literature is that experienced teachers' written plans present a considerably limited view of what happens during this process. When teachers engage in planning, they no longer dwell on certain aspects of teaching (e.g., behavior management strategies or classroom organization), as many of these have been established early in the school year and have become routine. Morine-Dershimer (1993) contends that much of what is planned by teachers becomes intuitive, as it has become second nature. Therefore, teachers' written plans often serve as organizers for the activities planned and may not present a comprehensive picture of all the factors that were considered during planning.

The planning of experienced teachers, according to Borko and Livingston (1989), is perceived as being more efficient and effective than that of inexperienced teachers. Experienced teachers have knowledge of students' learning skills, instructional strategies, and subject matter and have the ability to adapt to new learning situations. Consequently, they are able to discern what is relevant or irrelevant to their planning. Borko and Livingston describe the cognitive schema of experienced teachers as "more elaborate, more complex, more interconnected, and more easily accessed than those of novices" (p. 475). Experienced teachers rely on a vast repertoire of practices, ideas, and experiences to guide their efforts during planning. As student teachers' knowledge, thinking, and experiences are vastly different from those of

experienced teachers, the way in which these differences are accommodated during a practicum experience warrants significant consideration.

From these studies, one can appreciate that experienced teachers begin planning from a different vantage point than do inexperienced teachers. Experienced teachers begin planning by envisioning possible learning activities. Their planning is guided by their knowledge of students, prior teaching experiences, knowledge of classroom context, and experience with various teaching strategies. Their written plans depict only a small portion of what was considered during the planning process, as so much of what teachers do has become intuitive. Finally, experienced teachers' planning is viewed as more efficient than that of inexperienced teachers as they are able to use their knowledge of students and teaching techniques to adapt subject matter to various classroom contexts. Research literature about student teachers' planning is presented next to clarify the processes and experiences that have been identified with this period of learning to teach.

What Student Teachers Do Not Have to Draw Upon

The following section examines what student teachers do not have to draw on during planning. Student teachers' entry into the practicum with inadequate procedural knowledge causes them to become preoccupied with classroom management and control. The lack of teaching experience leaves student teachers relying on prior school and formal training experiences to guide them in their planning. Examples are presented (Kagan & Tippins, 1992; Neely, 1986) that illustrate two approaches taken to help student teachers think

more effectively about planning and to illustrate what happens when student teachers are left to plan without adequate support or guidance. Research is presented that examines the way that student teachers' decision-making about similar curricular issues was significantly influenced by the context of the classroom, personal histories, and former school experiences.

Student teachers' planning has been described in a number of research studies (Glick, Ahmed, Cave, & Chang, 1992; Griffey & Housner, 1991; John, 1991; Kagan & Tippins, 1992; Loewenberg-Ball & Feiman-Nemser, 1988; Morine-Dershimer, 1993; Neely, 1986; Sardo-Brown, 1993; Schleuter, 1991). Kagan (1992), in an extensive review of qualitative research studies on student teachers' professional growth, found that student teachers enter the practicum with inadequate knowledge of students and of classroom routine and procedures. Their views of students and classrooms are often unrealistic and idealized, leaving them "unprepared to deal with problems of class control and discipline. As a result, most novices become obsessed with class control, designing instruction, not to promote pupil learning, but to discourage disruptive behavior" (pp. 154-155).

Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) report that student teachers lack experience as classroom teachers and therefore are forced to rely on prior school experiences to guide their future teaching behaviours. The following studies explored the influence of various factors on student teachers' planning experiences. Glick et al. (1992) examined the sources used by secondary school science and mathematics student teachers during their planning. The

intent of the study was to identify the sources used for instructional representation (e.g., examples, analogies, demonstrations) by student teachers and the reasons for their choices. Data for this study were obtained from a questionnaire administered during a student teaching seminar. Findings suggest that the major source of ideas for planning came from adopted curricular materials and from the student teachers themselves. Cooperating teachers were also perceived as another important source for ideas and suggestions. The student teachers' preparation courses were not identified as a major source of ideas during their planning. This particular finding was contrary to a number of other researchers' findings about the role of preparation courses in planning.

A study of the effect of various structural factors on student teachers' planning (John, 1991) found that field experience has a significant impact. The classroom context, according to John, exerts a considerable amount of influence on the way student teachers plan and implement lessons. Students' characteristics, the type of curriculum in use, and the organization of the classroom is often reflected in student teachers' planning outcomes.

The following two studies attempted to assist student teachers in thinking more effectively about planning. Neely (1986) conducted a study which examined student teachers' use of cognitive monitoring during planning. Student teachers were trained in self-interrogation methods and their application to specific teaching practices (e.g., planning and student assessment). Findings from the study compared lesson plans of the student

teachers with cognitive training to those without any and found that the lesson plans of the student teachers with cognitive training reflected an understanding of the different planning components required for instruction. In contrast, the lesson plans of the student teachers without the cognitive training appeared to lack this awareness. Moreover, student teachers with cognitive training appeared to be more aware of the needs of the students and attempted to incorporate this knowledge into their planning.

The following study explored how student teachers made use of traditional planning models. Kagan and Tippins (1992) examined which lesson plan formats were the most practical for student teachers. Twelve student teachers at both the elementary and secondary level were asked to begin their practicum using a traditional model of lesson planning and to record in their logs any modifications made and the reasons for the changes. The findings revealed that these student teachers had made changes to the traditional model of planning in order to meet their own personal needs. The researchers observed that traditional models of planning had a negative effect on the planning of student teachers. For example, when secondary student teachers' planning reflected the traditional model, the researchers observed more of an information-giving style of teaching and a reliance on written forms of student assessment. In the case of the elementary student teachers, the traditional model of planning appeared to inhibit their ability to relate their lessons across the curriculum. Preplanned scripts were found to be a nuisance. Moreover, these student teachers preferred to exclude an evaluative component in their

written plan as they claimed to use informal methods for student assessment.

In contrast, the following study depicts what may happen as a result of student teachers being left to struggle on their own during the practicum. Westerman (1991) examined the thinking and decision-making of five student teachers and their cooperating teachers during three stages of decision making: preactive or planning, interactive or actual teaching, and postactive evaluation or reflection. Data collected from interviews, stimulated recall, classroom observations, and self-reports revealed that student teachers did not appear to have a satisfactory knowledge of the curriculum or of the students to assist them in making a competent analysis of the lessons being planned. During planning, the student teachers tended to follow the objectives stated in the prescribed curriculum rather than considering other sources of knowledge. While teaching, student teachers did not attempt to connect the content of the lesson to concepts learned in previous lessons.

Guillaume and Rudney (1993), in a year-long study, examined the reflective journals of student teachers in order to identify their changing concerns. From the findings, the researchers identified the following six categories of concern: "(a) lesson planning and evaluation, (b) discipline, (c) working with pupils, (d) working with cooperating teachers and adjusting to their classrooms, (e) working with others in the profession, and (f) transitions from student to professional teacher" (p. 70). The researchers reported that student teachers' planning focus became more comprehensive as they gained teaching experience. They attributed this change to an increase in teaching

responsibilities, the acquisition of various strategies for planning, and the ability to consider a greater number of factors while planning. Another significant change identified by the researchers was the change in student teachers' knowledge of students. At the start of the practicum, student teachers were overwhelmed by the range in abilities of the students; however, as their knowledge of the students grew over time, their planning began to reflect this newly acquired knowledge. A theme that emerged from the research was that the student teachers became more aware that their planning was shaped by certain variables both inside and outside the classroom.

Another theme present in the literature explores student teachers' decision-making processes and planning concerns. Schleuter (1991) explored the preactive and postactive curricular decision-making of three student teachers in elementary general music during their practicum placement. Schleuter observed that although all three subjects considered similar curricular issues, their approaches to the decision-making process were significantly different. The researcher attributed these differences to the diverse classroom contexts and the unique nature of each student teacher.

These studies illustrate that as student teachers engage in the process of planning, their decision-making is influenced by various classroom demands and by their enhanced knowledge of students. In addition, at the start of the practicum, student teachers' limited knowledge of students, subject matter, procedural routines, and instructional strategies may result in their planning being driven by the objectives stated in curricular materials and further by a

need to maintain classroom control. As student teachers gain more teaching experience, the research findings suggest that this newly acquired knowledge is evident in their planning.

Summary of Experienced Teacher and Student Teacher Planning

This overview of related literature has emphasized that experienced teachers' planning reflects a synthesis of their knowledge of students, classroom management, and instructional routines acquired from prior teaching experiences. Frequent findings in the research have shown that experienced teachers begin by first planning activities that will fill instructional time requirements rather than with the setting of behavioral objectives. An important finding that emerged from this literature review is that experienced teachers' written plans do not reflect all the factors that were considered during the course of planning. This has been attributed to the notion that much of what experienced teachers do during planning has become second nature.

Research studies have demonstrated that when student teachers receive assistance during this period of learning to teach, they become more aware of the various factors that need to be considered during the planning process. As student teachers gain more teaching experience, they use their enhanced knowledge of students, classroom procedures, and teaching strategies to facilitate planning for instruction. Some research suggests that traditional models of planning have a negative effect on student teachers as they appear to encourage them to become more teacher-directed in their teaching practices. Finally, it is important that we be cognizant of the tendency in the literature to

portray student teachers' planning as being deficient in comparison to that of experienced teachers. If we hope to expand our knowledge of student teachers' professional development, we need to consider how we perceive student teachers' planning needs and how to encourage their growth and independence as future teachers. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) have described the experiences of two student teachers in different education programs with opposing philosophies and approaches to preparation of prospective teachers. Based on their findings from classroom observations and interviews, the researchers contend that in order "to promote learning, teachers must know things worth teaching, consider what is important, and find ways to help students acquire understandings" (p. 256).

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN

> Qualitative inquiry, like conventional quantitative approaches to research, is ultimately a matter of persuasion, of seeing things in a way that satisfies, or is useful for the purposes we embrace. The evidence employed in qualitative studies comes from multiple sources. We are persuaded by its weight, by the coherence of the case, by the cogency of the interpretation. (Eisner, 1991, p. 39)

Participants

Participants for this study were selected from a one and a half year elementary cohort program in Elementary Education from a large western Canadian university. The cohort program encompassed Year three and the first half of Year four, from September 1994 through to December 1995. The intent of the cohort program was to "support a group of students in integrating component parts of their program (all courses and practicum) over the four terms of Year three and four" (Ellis, 1994). Students in the cohort were together for three courses in terms one and two of Year three and for the practicum in term one of Year four. The cohort courses offered students a variety of field experiences which included classroom observations, working one-on-one with a student, as well plan and teach lesson and unit to a small group of students (see Appendix A). Reflective writing was also required throughout courses and practicum. The courses taken as a cohort focused on language arts, science, and analysis of teaching.

During the students' Year three, 1994-1995, I was a Graduate Assistant to one of the instructors of the three member instructional team. A component of

this assistantship entailed conducting pre-practicum research with six female student volunteers from the cohort program. There were only two males in the eighteen member cohort and all six volunteers for the research were female. In both terms one and two, I met with each student for an individual interview and had access to their reflection papers, course assignments, and teaching portfolios. In April of 1995, I asked the six students if they would consider being participants in my own research study for the upcoming fall practicum term. All of them agreed to participate in my study and shared with me at the time their belief that it would provide them with an opportunity to think aloud. Having the opportunity to interview members of the cohort during 1994-1995 enabled me to establish a relationship of trust and confidence that is integral to conducting a successful research study. In order to help clarify the influences of personal, contextual, and course work variables, participants were sought from a cohort program since they had taken a number of common classes together. Furthermore, Weinstein (1988) states that

> requiring students to go through teacher education in a cohort may also help to reduce optimistic biases. Opportunities for social comparison may help prospective teachers to recognize that they have had similar background experiences with children and encourage them to examine the relevance of these experiences for teaching. (p. 39)

Research Orientation

Qualitative research methods were used in this study to explore the activities and thinking which student teachers engage in as they plan. Research that is constructivist in nature, Kagan (1990) argues, attempts to elicit insights,

explain certain events, and find meaning. The intent of my study was not to prove theory or predict behavior but to reconstruct the planning experiences of six student teachers. The study is both descriptive and interpretive in nature. It describes the processes student teachers undergo as they engage in planning during the practicum, and it offers interpretive accounts of these experiences. Descriptive research, Peshkin (1993) claims, has value as it provides us with the opportunity to understand processes, people, or situations more clearly. I attempted to obtain student teachers' descriptions of their planning processes. Interpretive research, as well, is valuable as it provides insights that refine existing knowledge, identify problems, clarify complexities, and elaborate existing knowledge (Peshkin, 1993). As my study is both descriptive and interpretive, it will describe student teachers' planning processes and develop interpretive accounts that elaborate on our existing knowledge of student teachers' planning, provide insight into this period of learning to teach, identify potential problems, and clarify our understanding of student teachers' planning experiences.

Interpretive inquiry, as articulated by hermeneutics, begins with a question, a practical concern, or a caring (Packer & Addison, 1989). My study is based on a practical concern about how we can be more helpful to student teachers as they develop their planning approaches. Therefore, I entered the hermeneutic circle with a real question about how student teachers currently experience planning in their practicum work. My pre-understanding of student teachers' planning was based upon my own experiences as a student teacher,

as a cooperating teacher, and as a graduate student in curriculum. According to Packer and Addison (p. 33), "this means we both understand it and at the same time misunderstand it; we inevitably shape the phenomena to fit a 'fore-structure' that has been shaped by expectations and preconceptions, and by our lifestyle, culture and tradition."

This pre-understanding dominates in the forward arc of projection in the hermeneutic circle. My initial interpretation of student teachers' planning experiences was influenced by my own underlying beliefs and assumptions about what the planning process entails.

Packer and Addison (1989) clarify that understanding is circular in nature, and the return arc of the hermeneutic circle involves the evaluation of one's initial interpretations. As I read back through my first interpretive accounts and re-examined the data which included all transcripts and other documents (e.g., reflection papers, lesson plans, personal reflection entries, and field notes), I actively searched for contradictions, gaps, and absences and purposefully explored alternate conceptual frameworks for making sense of the planning experiences of student teachers. The return arc entails a deliberate effort to develop the most adequate interpretation possible. During this process, the literature was re-examined to remind me of alternate conceptual frameworks and other researchers' findings. As well, I discussed my initial interpretations with colleagues.

Data Collection

The practicum was scheduled from September 18, 1995 through to December 8, 1995 for a period of twelve weeks. Prior to the start of the practicum, I contacted the participants by telephone to remind them of their involvement in my study and to establish a date and time for the pre-practicum interview. I purposefully chose to meet with the student teachers prior to the start of the practicum in order to discover their conceptions of planning and its role in teaching and students' learning prior to their introduction to their practicum classroom.

Data was collected from each of the six participants on a weekly basis over the twelve week period. This included pre-and post conferences about the lessons I observed, my classroom observations and field notes on their actual teaching, reflection/response journals, and any material related to planning. These conferences included discussion about lesson preparation, questions related to teaching, significant practicum experiences, previous ideas about teaching, and any changes in thinking as a result of their current teaching experiences. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed and artifacts (e.g., lesson plans, unit plans, planning books, response journals) used by the participants were examined. In addition, throughout the practicum, I had occasional conversational interviews with the cooperating teachers to discuss their perceptions of the student teachers' growth and areas of strength.

The research was conducted in three elementary schools in a large urban city. The participants in my study were placed two per school as

members of four to six student per school cohorts. The first school, identified as School A, has a population of about three hundred students and is located in a middle-to-high income neighbourhood. Parents have high expectations of the school staff and place a strong emphasis on core subjects. In addition, the parents expect that their children will become familiar and adept with technology and have meaningful extra-curricular experiences. School B has a population of four hundred students and is located in a high-income neighbourhood. The parents have high expectations for student achievement and behavior. The school is characterized by high parental involvement in school-related activities. In contrast, School C has a student population of three hundred and is situated in a low- to middle-income neighbourhood with a high number of single parent families. The school was designated as an area site for special needs students (behavior disorder, ESL, learning disabled). Parental expectations include an emphasis on the core subjects and that the school should be a safe and enjoyable place for all students.

Interviewing

As the major source of data collection, interviewing enabled me to gain an understanding of how the participating student teachers approached and engaged in planning. Interviewing, as described by Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 96), is a method of gathering "descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world." Weekly semi-structured interviews were conducted with the student teachers during the practicum in order to trace their changing

perceptions and experiences of planning.

Patton (1990, p. 278) states that "the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind." Interviews are carried out to discover that which can not be observed directly. It is a way to access an individual's thoughts, feelings, and intentions that otherwise are not available through more traditional research methods. In the weekly interviews, the student teachers were asked to reflect orally on their lessons or units both before and after they were conducted. Through questioning and discussion, the interviewer attempted to understand the way student teachers understood or experienced their planning. "Effective interviews should cause both the interviewer and the interviewee to feel that a 2- way flow of communication is going on" (p. 327). Prior to the start of the study, the student teachers were informed of its purpose and how the data would be collected and used. During the interviews, I shared some of my own personal experiences with planning to ensure that the relationship was one of mutual dialogue. As Oakley (1981, p. 49) insists, there is "no intimacy without reciprocity."

My interviews were semi-structured to allow participants to "define their world in unique ways" (Merriam, 1988, p. 73). Initial interviews were guided by common prepared questions; however, the unique context of each classroom, the students, the cooperating teachers, and the student teacher's own planning style influenced the direction of later interviews. A good interviewer, according to Merriam, listens and tries to avoid imposing his/her own particular biases or beliefs on the participants. I hoped that, by reflecting first on my own biases and

conceptions of planning, I would be more conscious of their influence during interviews.

All interviews were tape recorded to increase accuracy of data collection and to allow me to be more attentive to my participants' responses. Notes were taken as a precaution to record ideas or phrases. At the end of each week, I reviewed all interviews in order to develop a summary of some of the key ideas and themes that emerged for each of the student teachers. I used some of these ideas in future interviews to seek further clarification or elaboration.

Other Data

Other data included course assignments, interview transcripts from the previous year, and my research journal. Collected cohort assignments (see Appendix A) incuded: three reflective writing assignments, a classroom observation report, a personal philosophy of teaching, a reflection on the type of teacher they aspired to be, and a teaching portfolio. There were two interview transcripts for each participant from the previous year's cohort research. I also had the personal research journal which I wrote during the practicum research.

Ethical Considerations

As this study involved human participants, a concerted attempt was made to avoid risk or harm. As part of my graduate research assistant duties, I had conducted interviews with participants from a cohort program over two terms. The research relationships already established with prospective participants increased their comfort in talking with me during the practicum. No risks were posed to the student teachers, cooperating teachers, or students. Anonymity of

schools, teachers, and student teachers was ensured. Prior to the commencement of the study, a completed research proposal was submitted to the Ethics Committee, Faculty of Education Undergraduate Student Services, and the local Board of Education for permission to conduct the study. Once written permission was granted from the school district, the researcher invited student teachers to consider participating in the study. Upon gaining student teachers' consent, I met with school personnel to explain the purpose and nature of my study. Written consent forms for student and cooperating teachers reviewed the nature of the study and guaranteed anonymity as well as the opportunity to withdraw without penalty. Names of participants, cooperating teachers, schools, and student teachers were not used in my dissertation. My advisor was kept informed of my research procedures through regularly scheduled weekly meetings. Any issues or concerns about the ethical aspects of my study were brought to the immediate attention of my advisor before proceeding any further with the study.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis and interpretation commence during data collection (Bogdan & Biklen,1992; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Bogden and Biklen describe data analysis as "the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others" (p. 153).

The extensive data collection period enabled me to identify those experiences that appeared to be most salient for each student teacher as well as those that were common to all six. Analyzing the data while it was being collected provided me not only with the opportunity to search for patterns and themes, but also to identify gaps and questions on which to focus following interviews and observations. Miles and Huberman (1994) contend that early analysis is critical, as it helps the researcher to go forward and backward in thinking about the data as it is collected and to develop new ideas for collecting future data. On a daily basis I recorded in my research journal reflections any questions, ideas, or thoughts that had occurred to me during data collection and interpretation. I also examined any related artifacts (reflection papers, response journals, cohort research interviews) in search of any changes in student teachers' thinking about planning and instruction.

Periodically during the data collection, I reread the literature about student teachers' planning in order to re-examine the findings from other research studies and to remind myself of other perspectives from which to consider my topic. Examining the literature while collecting data, according to Bogden and Biklen (1992), enhances analysis. It was this process of going forward and backward with the data that I believe helped me to gain a deeper understanding of this period of student teachers' learning to teach.

Developing Coding Categories

After all the data (67 interviews, lesson plans, reflection journals) were collected, I had to find a practical and efficient way to organize my findings so

that I could begin a more manageable and deliberate analysis. I decided to use coding categories to organize the substantial amount of data collected. It is those key words and phrases, Bogden and Biklen (1992) claim, that become the researcher's coding categories, as this is a practical way to sort the descriptive data collected. As I read through the interview transcripts and other related planning artifacts for the first time, I highlighted those words, phrases, or passages that appeared to stand out from the rest. In the margin, I recorded any key words or phrases that appeared to best represent a student teacher's particular planning and teaching experience or preoccupation. Once this was done, I went through each interview transcript and assigned a preliminary coding category to the comments. I read each student teacher's transcript several times and each time I repeated the above procedure (using different highlighter colors) to further identify any other insights, patterns, or potential relationships that might have existed across the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) maintain that "within that mass of data, you may not know--or may not have tagged--the pieces that matter the most for the purpose of your study" (p. 56). The next step in my data analysis was to transfer these coding categories into a more manageable, user-friendly format. For each of the six student teachers' interviews, I created a chart illustrating the various major coding categories and their sub-categories. After having done this with all interviews (67 in all), I began with one major coding category (e.g., planning) for all six student teachers and searched for common themes (e.g., constraints). These were then transferred to another chart. Those categories that were unique to a

particular student teacher were placed on a separate chart. I repeated this process for the remaining major coding categories. Data analysis, according to Merriam (1988), involves the development of conceptual categories "that interpret the data for the reader" (p. 133). As these were preliminary coding categories, I used them to develop an idea web that illustrated some of the key ideas that best represented the particular category. From the idea webs, I developed the themes that appeared to most adequately represent the planning and teaching experiences of the student teachers.

From this extensive data analysis, six major themes emerged that appeared to represent the most salient or dominant dimensions/aspects of the six student teachers' growth in planning and classroom practice during this period in their professional development. These themes were: (a) student teachers' pre-practicum conceptions of planning, (b) student teachers' expectations of cooperating teachers' role in planning, (c) changing areas of concern and growth in planning during the practicum, (d) student assessment, (e) learning from the unexpected, and (f) the role of materials and resources in student teachers' planning.

Before I present my findings on the planning experiences of the six student teachers, I include a brief portrait of each participant to offer a more whole and human context to the study. Pseudonyms have been assigned to both the student and cooperating teacher. In addition, certain identifiable factors have been altered to safeguard the anonymity of the participants and schools involved in the study.

Portraits of Participants

This section presents portraits of the six female elementary student teachers. The accounts offered highlight what appeared to be important for each student teacher at different points in her professional development. Early school experiences and different backgrounds were reflected in the wide range of concerns that appeared to preoccupy the student teachers' thinking about teaching and students' learning.

Amy

I experienced Amy as a thoughtful and accommodating person. During my visits she would always take the time to inquire about how my study was proceeding and she went out of her way to accommodate my requests. Amy was single and between twenty and twenty-five years of age. After completing high school, she chose to postpone her entry into a post-secondary program, while she spent some time in the work force. She had been involved in tutoring an older student and claimed that this experience helped her better appreciate what classroom teachers face with the wide ranges in student ability and interest. As well, Amy had spent a few summers working in a children's recreation program.

From the start of her third year in the education program, Amy expressed a desire to develop a relationship with her students that was based on mutual respect and caring. She envisioned her future classroom as a place where students would be treated fairly and with respect. Furthermore, she believed that establishing this type of classroom environment would better support her

efforts to show her students that she cared about their well-being:

> I want the students to learn respect for me and each other. . . . I think being fair makes the classroom a safe place, and I think that I can show my care for the students in that setting too. (Cohort Reflection Paper 1, Sept. 30/94, p. 3)

By the end of the first term in the cohort program, Amy was able to provide a concrete example of a type of learning activity that would promote a climate of respect and tolerance in the classroom and could be incorporated for the first day of school:

> Picturing the first day of school, I think that the story I would choose to read to my new class would be about respect. . . . From the very beginning I want to impress on my students that everyone--their classmates, the teacher, the principal, and the custodian--deserves their attention and consideration. (Cohort Reflection Paper 2, Dec. 7/94, pp. 1-2)

At this stage in her growth, Amy was concerned about finding a way to let her students know that she cared about them; therefore she planned to spend time at the beginning of the year discovering something special about each one of her students:

> My respect for the students is something that I want to be blatantly obvious to them. I really think it is important to discover and latch onto a special quality about every student in the class--notice it, mention it, promote it, encourage it, positively develop it. (Cohort Reflection Paper 2, Dec. 7/94, p. 2)

During the practicum, Amy's natural rapport with her students was noticed and commented upon by her cooperating teacher:

> She's a natural with the children. She finds it very easy to relate to them, either one-on-one or in large groups. She's very much a people person. (Joan, Cooperating Teacher, Interview 1, Oct. 6/95, p. 1)

A teaching goal that remained constant for Amy from the start of her cohort program was to develop a connection with her students. Therefore, she was thrilled when early in the practicum she took an important step towards establishing a relationship with her practicum students:

> We communicated. Sometimes I talked and they listened. Other times they talked and I listened. (Practicum Reflections, Sept. 22/95, p.1)

Over the course of the practicum, a significant part of Amy's growth as a teacher was reflected in the way that she viewed herself as being closely related to the students. She demonstrated her interest in what the students had to offer by incorporating their suggestions into her lessons:

> I see myself as the kind of teacher who is closely related to the students, trying to use their ideas, but also getting to know them too. (Interview 10, Nov. 24/95, pp. 1-2)

With only a month left in the practicum, Amy's devotion to her students was revealed by her anticipation that it would be difficult to say good bye to them:

> I can tell that it is going to be extremely hard for me to say good bye in December. Is it this difficult all the time? I'm already dreading it and it's a month away for me. (Practicum Reflections, Nov. 22/95, p. 1)

Finally, Amy's thoughts appeared to remain with her students long after the practicum was over, for whenever she stopped by my office, it was with a great deal of wistfulness that she recalled her experiences in the practicum. Amy's need to find ways to demonstrate her care and compassion for her students' well-being remained constant throughout the practicum.

Fran

From the beginning I found that Fran appeared to be self-conscious about the way in which others (students, cooperating teachers, myself) would perceive her and she demonstrated a strong desire to please. Her responses to my questions were often accompanied by a nervous laugh. I noticed her searching my face for some indication that she had provided the "correct response." Fran was single and between twenty and twenty-five years of age. She had gone directly from high school into an education program. Fran had experience working with children during an after-school care program and in Sunday School. These experiences led to her desire to learn a variety of effective classroom management strategies.

During her first term in the cohort program, Fran was preoccupied with classroom management. It was her belief that students' learning would be enhanced in a well-managed classroom:

> The reason that mangement is so important to me is because I want my students to be able to learn when I have a classroom of my own. One of my beliefs, whether it is right or wrong, is that learning does take place more readily in a classroom where some type of management is used. . . . I found that most of the time I had to keep telling them to be quiet and it seemed as if I spent more time doing this than actually focusing on the activities. As a result, I felt that my students were not really learning anything. . . . This was very discouraging for me, and I feel that it was because I did not know how to manage my students. I wanted so much for them to be able to pay attention and to learn from what I was saying. This is why I want to learn some effective management techniques. (Cohort Reflection Paper 1, Sept. 30/94, p. 2)

At the end of the first term in the cohort program, Fran's focus remained on classroom management. However, she was now able to offer some concrete

examples to use in a classroom to maintain students' attention and cooperation:

> I am therefore glad to report that, since I wrote my last reflection paper, I have learned some techniques for classroom management. I have become aware of the fact that it will be very important for me to have certain signals in order to gain the attention of my students. . . . I could make using the attention signals into a game for the students so that they could have fun, but they would be giving me their attention at the same time. . . . For example, with the "Give Me Five" attention signal . . . . (Cohort Reflection Paper 2, Dec. 7/94, pp. 2-3)

In the second term of the cohort program, Fran conducted structured classroom observations of different teachers over the course of several days. This experience appeared to have had a significant impact on Fran's view of classroom management. She expressed her excitement at having observed several different approaches to classroom management strategies. According to Fran, this experience helped her to broaden her understanding of classroom management:

> These observations have proven to be a very valuable experience for me because I was able to see how teachers treat their students and how they handle disruptions and behaviour problems through using such things as positive acknowledgement and low key responses. These experiences also really opened my eyes to different ways that classroom management techniques can be used in the classroom setting. (Cohort Assignment, Classroom Observations, Feb. 10/95, p. 1)

Prior to the start of the practicum, Fran once again expressed an interest in learning more about classroom management from her cooperating teachers. She recalled how her previous classroom observations had been helpful in giving her ideas for managing a classroom:

> Classroom management skills. It was helpful being in a school already. Last year doing the observation and stuff, to watch how some of the

> teachers have used classroom management skills. . . . (Interview 1, Aug. 30/95, p. 8)

At this point in her professional growth, Fran's focus in teaching was on finding an effective approach to managing her students' behaviour. She intended to try to incorporate some of the suggestions offered by her cooperating teacher:

> I still need to work on my classroom management skill, but I have received some suggestions from Wendy [cooperating teacher]. Next time, I will be sure that I ask for raised hands when I ask questions of the students. (Practicum Reflections, Sept. 25/95, p. 1)

Almost a month after the start of the practicum, Fran's growth as a teacher was evident in the advice that she had to offer to prospective student teachers based on her own practicum experiences. She suggested that student teachers spend time beforehand thinking about developing some classroom management strategies rather than focusing exclusively on lesson planning as she had done:

> Be thinking about how you're going to manage the kids and stuff. That's something I didn't really think about. All I was thinking about when I first came in was lesson plans. (Interview 3, Oct. 13/95, p. 5)

As the practicum came to an end, Fran's focus continued to be that of classroom management; however she appeared to feel more confident about her ability to manage a classroom. According to Fran, her cooperating teacher commented on the change in the students' response towards her as a teacher:

> Today I felt really good about the way that my lessons went. Most of the students stayed on task really well and as a result Wendy [cooperating teacher] told me they are starting to respect me and my expectations as well. There were times when they could have very easily been

> distracted, but most of them stayed on task because they knew what was expected of them. This makes me feel good that I am able to manage the students. (Practicum Reflections, Nov. 13/95, p. 1)

In summary, from the start of the cohort program through to the end of the practicum, Fran's focus was on classroom management. At the start of the cohort program Fran wanted to expand her knowledge of effective management techniques to use in the classroom. Her growth as a teacher appeared to be enhanced by her willingness to incorporate the suggestions made to her by the cooperating teacher about her classroom management practices. Furthermore, she used her practicum reflection time to consider different ways she could alternate her approach towards managing her students in the classroom. As she gained teaching experience, she began to develop her own classroom management techniques and was pleased at her ability to implement them successfully during her teaching.

Finally, despite her preoccupation with classroom management throughout the entire course of the practicum, Fran did demonstrate her growth in teaching in other areas. She recognized that learning activities such as class discussions and the manner in which students interact with materials can reveal what they are learning and thinking:

> The wall paper was a visual aid for the students and they seemed to respond well to it, in that they seemed to be very interested in telling me what kind of patterns that they saw in the wall paper. (Practicum Reflections, Sept. 29/95, p. 1)

Another indicator of Fran's growth as a teacher was revealed in her approach to a lesson that not only maintained students' attention, but also provided them with the opportunity to become involved and share their understandings and thoughts:

> I kept their attention through reading a story (in an expressive manner), periodically asking questions during the story and using a chart to discuss the concept of changing critical thoughts to positive ones concerning ourselves. Through doing these activities, the students were able to share their ideas. (Practicum Reflections, Nov. 13/95, p. 2)

Lastly, during the pre-practicum interview Fran had expressed a concern about her ability to have enough energy to carry out the multitude of teaching responsibilites that she had observed during her classroom observations conducted a few months earlier. Furthermore, Fran was worried about her ability to be creative in her teaching and therefore made a conscious attempt during the practicum to plan activities that were interesting and motivating for students. Her enthusiasm and commitment to be creative in her planning and teaching was commented on by her cooperating teacher during our first interview:

> I'd say she's enthusiastic. . . . I find that probably her greatest strength is that she responds in such positive and enthusiastic ways. That seems to be very easy for her because she seems to be that type of person. . . . Actually by her preparation, in terms of bringing things in for the kids to look at. She's been to the library. I've given her things but she's gone beyond that. So, yeah, definitely, it's more than I would have done. (Mary, Cooperating Teacher, Interview 1, Oct. 13/95, p. 1)

Lynn

Lynn was a bubbly and enthusiastic student teacher. In her description of her planning process, she appeared to be conscientious about finding an

interesting or different way in which to present a lesson. Lynn was single and between twenty and twenty-five years of age. From an early age Lynn had worked with students in a variety of recreational programs. Upon graduating from high school, Lynn spent two years in the work force.

During the first term of the cohort program, Lynn appeared to be concerned about her capacity to be creative in her planning and teaching:

> This is what I worry about most when I think about my first year of teaching--being creative both in and out of the classroom. When I observe someone else and implement their way of doing something, I can be successful. However, I worry that on my own I will not be able to portray my enthusiasm for teaching and learning in the classroom in a fresh, new way that will excite the children as well. (Cohort Reflection Paper 1, Sept. 30/94, p. 4)

Later on in the term, Lynn's growth as a teacher was reflected through her becoming aware that not every lesson could be exciting. However, she still believed that it was important to make an effort to plan lessons that offered students interesting learning activities in order to capture their attention:

> Everything in school will not be fun and interesting, but I think that if the effort is there by the teacher to make more things interesting to the students, they will really appreciate this. (Cohort Reflection Paper 2, Dec. 7/94, p. 6)

Lynn's desire to make learning fun for her future students appeared to have been influenced by her earlier experiences as a student in school. It was not until she had the opportunity to conduct structured classroom observations of teachers that she realized that learning could be enjoyable as well as educational:

> The more I've been in her classroom the more I realized that kids can have fun learning. I don't know why I never associated that before, because school was school to me. It was never a lot of fun. . . . It was always you go and do work and then you get to go out and have fun. (Cohort Interview 2, Mar. 16/95, p. 17)

Prior to the start of the practicum, Lynn believed that children needed to experience frequent change in their learning activities and to be actively engaged in the lesson:

> I know that kids don't like to sit in their desks for a long period of time, whereas, I mean, if you have four core subjects, that's what your timetable is in the morning, I think you've got to give them time to get up and walk around the classroom, talk to their friends, even if it's just for two minutes. Say, "Okay, go, take a breather, walk around the room, do whatever. . . ." I think kids need to be doing things. I don't think you can expect them to just sit in their desks all the time and do seat work. I think they have to have experiences in science and even in social. (Interview 1, Aug. 23/95, p. 9)

During her second week in the practicum, Lynn decided to incorporate group work in her lesson plan as a way to involve the students:

> Well, this was the first time that I was going to put them into pairs, or just say the person beside you, and have them come out with examples. This was the first time I really tried to involve them and have them do something. (Interview 2, Sept. 25/95, p. 3)

Later on in the practicum, Lynn's knowledge of the students' lack of interest in mathematics influenced her to start with a fun activity as a way to make the lesson more appealing:

> In math I'd say three quarters of the class does not like math. That's just the feeling I'm getting, so I try and do something a little bit different every time when I start so that they're not thinking aaahh, math. I try to do something to catch their interest at first. (Interview 3, Oct. 5/95, p. 10)

Another indicator of Lynn's growth as a teacher was evident in the way she incorporated routines into her teaching as a way to capture students' interest in the lesson being presented:

> That's part of my routine. I always have something fun, different, something like that to start off a lesson because it gets them excited. (Interview 4, Oct.12/95, p. 7)

With only a month left in the practicum, Lynn continued to strive to find ways to make her lessons appealing for students:

> I went to the library because I wanted to find a game to teach them. I was thinking that I wanted to approach it in a different way instead of me just standing at the chalkboard and teaching it. . . . (Interview 7, Nov. 2/95, p. 1)

Lynn demonstrated her growth as a teacher in the way she adapted the problems in a textbook to reflect the students' interests and to involve them in the lesson:

> You can make it fun. These story problems were boring and so I had our class going to West Edmonton Mall and how many parent drivers would we need? I use things with them in it and right away they perk up . . . . I use their names, I get them involved, and it doesn't seem so boring anymore. (Interview 10, Nov. 23/95, p. 9)

Lynn's pre-practicum goal was to present lessons in an interesting and appealing manner to the students. Throughout the practicum she made a deliberate effort to search for ways in which to enhance students' involvement in the lesson and to provide them with meaningful learning experiences.

Carol

Carol impressed me as a creative and caring student teacher. During discussions about the planning process, Carol described her efforts to find interesting and creative methods to present lessons as a way to enhance the students' learning experiences. In her practicum reflection journal, I found several examples of her concern for her students' welfare. She often left notes for herself to serve as a reminder to spend some time with a particular student or to write him/her a special message. Carol was single and between twenty-six and thirty years of age. After graduating from high school, she spent some time travelling around the world and had experience working with children and adults in both formal and informal educational settings.

In the second term of the cohort program, Carol's focus was on planning. Carol believed that as long as she knew the objective of the lesson, it was unnecessary to write down all the details in her lesson plan. She believed that as she had already spent time thinking about how the lesson would proceed, having to record the process on paper was redundant. Furthermore, Carol claimed that she knew teachers who did not write all the steps they had considered during planning:

> I know that if I know my objective and my goal and what I want them to learn, then I don't have to write it all down. I also know most teachers don't write it all down anyway. For me it was frustrating to have to write down every detail. . . . I'm the kind of person who doesn't like to do any more than I have to, so I found it really frustrating to try and discipline myself to get down to it. (Cohort Interview 2, Mar. 16/95, pp. 3-4)

Despite her reluctance to include in her lesson plans the processes she went through during planning, Carol nonetheless admitted afterwards she felt more confident about teaching the lesson:

> Actually when I got done I felt confident about that lesson and I said that at the end of my assignment, I would feel ready to go in and teach that lesson because I had sort of gruellingly gone through all of it. (Cohort Interview 2, Mar. 16/95, p. 4)

As Carol anticipated the start of the practicum, she once again expressed her concern with planning. Carol was apprehensive about her ability to record the process she went through to plan a lesson. As part of a cohort assignment, Carol had planned an entire science unit; however with the start of the practicum only a few weeks away, she had reservations about whether or not she could plan a unit during the practicum and was hopeful that her cooperating teacher would share some tips and ideas about unit planning:

> The area I feel the weakest in is planning an entire unit, just because I know I'm the kind of person that doesn't want to sit down and (pause) the hardest part is sitting down. I think I know how to plan a unit. I know how to (pause) try and make some order since I've done it before but, I don't know, maybe I can't learn that from my cooperating teacher. Maybe I'll have to do it on my own. But maybe some hints about how that teacher goes about planning a whole unit. (Interview 1, Aug. 23/95, p. 4)

In the second week on the practicum, Carol's focus continued to be on planning. At this stage in her growth she believed that her lesson plans needed to be in more detail:

> I'd say now my focus needs to be more on lesson plans cause I'm not doing them, maybe, as detailed as I need to. (Interview 2, Sept. 28/95, p. 7)

Interestingly, Carol's initial reluctance to provide details in her lesson plans was noted by her cooperating teacher as having made it somewhat difficult to understand what would take place in the lesson:

> At the beginning I didn't recognize from the plans exactly what maybe she was going to exactly do. (Interview with Rita, Cooperating Teacher, Nov. 27/95, p. 2)

Having the opportunity to reflect daily on her teaching experiences appeared to help Carol's professional development. She began to use her practicum reflection journal as a planning journal for teaching ideas. Carol believed an important part of her planning process entailed spending time processing ideas for future lessons:

> I'm supposed to be planning instead of reflecting, but the last couple of days I haven't really written much in my journal. Then I thought I was getting worse and worse in my planning and I knew that I had to just process all that stuff before I could move on and then it just started moving into the next day's planning. (Interview 4, Oct. 12/95, p. 4)

> This is becoming a "planning journal" more than a reflection--but it has helped get me into planning for tomorrow. (Practicum Reflection, Oct. 11/95, p. 5)

> Right now I have so many thoughts, connections, reflections coming to my mind. I can't remember to write them all, but the reflecting is helping me to plan future lessons, e. g., health. (Practicum Reflection, Oct. 31/95, p. 4)

A significant indicator of her growth as a teacher was evident in the way Carol came to appreciate the value of planning an entire unit in advance, as it would enable her to anticipate potential problems and consider alternate approaches:

> This whole experience drives home the fact that planning the whole unit ahead of time really can avoid some of these situations. I see now the amount of planning that goes into a project like this. I have to say that I caught on a bit too late. (Practicum Reflection, Oct. 6/95, p. 3)

With less than a month to the end of the practicum, Carol continued to struggle with transforming her teaching ideas into lesson plans:

> I have had art and social studies ideas rolling through my head all evening, with health and problem solving muddled in there too. . . . And that's about how it feels . . . muddled. Good ideas, but they aren't out on paper yet and some of them need to be for tomorrow. (Practicum Reflection, Nov. 15/95, p. 1)

By the end of the practicum, Carol claimed to have made an important discovery about the planning process. She realized that a critical part of her approach to planning involved spending time mulling over different teaching ideas prior to writing them down in a lesson plan:

> Well, this is in relation to planning. This is more of a surprise about myself. I think I've finally learned a little bit more how I work. I'm more relaxed with that because I can come up with ideas right away, but I don't always get moving on them until later on and that used to really bother me. I'd get all uptight that I'm wasting all this time not doing anything. I know that sometimes I'm not ready on time but I think I work best by getting the ideas incubating and then at the end just sort of go with the stuff that needs to be done. (Interview 12, Dec. 4/95, p. 3)

From the start of the practicum to the end, the issue of planning remained Carol's major concern. Her lesson plans were often sketchy with details; however, from my observations of her teaching, it was apparent that she had put a considerable amount of time and thought into selecting activities and materials for her lessons. During the practicum, Carol often admitted that her teaching would have been enhanced, if she had spent the time to write out her

lesson plan in more detail, as it might have helped her to discover potential problem areas.

Barb

Barb was a creative and enthusiastic student teacher. Her pre-practicum teaching goal was to present lessons that would motivate students' interest in the activities presented. At the start of the practicum, Barb voluntarily assisted in the organization of two extra-curricular student clubs and participated in a presentation to other teachers. Barb was single and between twenty and twenty-five years of age. She had gone directly from high school into a post-secondary program. Barb had spent several summers working with children in various summer recreational programs.

At the start of the cohort program, Barb described her desire to be the type of teacher who was creative and made learning fun for her students:

> When I envision myself as a teacher, the first word that pops into my mind is "creativity." I picture myself as that one wacky teacher that seems to exist in every school, the one who is seen ever so often heading off to class dressed in a silly costume. . . . My goal in teaching is to make learning and school in general as much fun as possible without it being total chaos. I want to make learning an adventure, something exciting and magical. (Cohort Reflection Paper 1, Sept. 30/94, pp. 1-2)

Later on in the term, Barb described her future classroom as active and student-centered:

> I want my classes to be alive and bustling with activity, but not to the extreme of chaos. . . . Part of my philosophy of teaching is that I believe children are active, growing individuals who want to discover the world around them, not only be told about it. (Cohort Reflection Paper 2, Dec. 7/94, p. 4)

A few months later, after having conducted structured classroom observations of various teachers over several days, Barb's desire to have a fun and active classroom was reinforced:

> Sometimes a really structured classroom works well too, but I just don't think that would work for the way I am. I don't think it would be my style, because the one teacher I was with . . . she has so many signals and they were so well-behaved. I thought, "Oh my god. . . . I just can't see myself in that kind of environment. I will be the goofy teacher and I know I will be the one that the kids kind of laugh at and have fun with and feel they can have fun with." (Cohort Interview 2, Mar. 10/95, p. 6)

In the second week of the practicum, Barb appeared to have undergone a significant change in her thinking about teaching. She no longer was convinced that her earlier ideas of teaching were realistic, as she was now concerned with gaining control of the classroom:

> It's only been over a week and I'm thinking I don't know if I can be the teacher I want to be. I think a lot of it's going to start to come more naturally, but right now there's so much more I feel like I have to deal with that it's hard for me to be that creative and spontaneous and everything. Classroom management is a huge one for me right now. This class is a little bit of a challenge and one of my skills I'm really trying to work on. (Interview 2, Sept. 28/95, p. 3)

During a subsequent interview, Barb described attempts to be creative in her teaching of a lesson. Unfortunately, the students did not respond as she had hoped, and she reported having spent the major part of the lesson focusing on classroom management:

> I wasn't very happy with it because poetry is supposed to be fun and creative. I felt like I had no choice because I had no enthusiasm as I did not feel up to it. It was partly due to having to discipline them five times. (Interview 3, Oct. 3/95, p. 6)

Six weeks after the start of the practicum, Barb was still preoccupied with classroom management. During her discussion about her approach to planning lessons, Barb admitted that she deliberately chose activities that would maintain classroom control:

> Classroom management is just a bigger issue than I thought it would be. It really influences and affects your lesson plans so much. I find I'm really always thinking about that for an activity. Can they do this or am I going to lose them on this? Or are they going to go out of control? . . . I have planned everything kind of boring, because I know if I plan something really fun that they are going to go nuts on me. (Interview 6, Oct. 24/95, pp. 5-6)

After the switch in classroom placements, Barb found herself assigned to an older group of students. The experience of teaching at a higher grade level appeared to have made Barb feel more confident about presenting lessons that were less teacher-directed:

> Even this experiment. I mean, I didn't think twice about doing this with them. But with that other class I would have been,oh, kind of nervous about it, cause I knew they would have been running around the room hitting the tuning fork on things, or something, you know? (Interview 7, Nov. 14/95, p. 4)

Barb's growth as a teacher was reflected in her planning lessons that responded to the students' needs and interests:

> I guess I was just looking for something a little different because I know they were getting kind of bored with doing the novel study sheets. We did this interview and stuff like that, and I just thought of doing something a little more creative and fun. (Interview 9, Nov. 28/95, p. 2)

By the end of the practicum, Barb's initial image of teaching had undergone a significant change. No longer did she envision her approach to

teaching as relaxed and easy-going, but she remained hopeful that she could provide learning activities that were exciting and interesting for students:

> I really kind of thought I'd have this very relaxed atmosphere. I don't think it would be quite like that, but I'd like to think that my classroom would still be very colorful and there would be a lot of energy there and enthusiasm. (Interview 10, Dec. 5/95, p. 6)

At the start of the cohort program, Barb wanted to use her creative abilities to plan lessons that would be exciting and fun for students. Once in the practicum, however, Barb became preoccupied with classroom management and consequently she found it difficult to be the creative and fun-loving teacher that she had aspired to be earlier in her professional development. By the end of the practicum, Barb's focus continued to be on classroom management, although she felt more confident in her ability to handle her students and attempted to plan lessons that were less teacher-directed than her earlier ones.

Susan

Susan always struck me as a quiet and reserved person. During my weekly observations in the practicum classroom, Susan always spoke to her students in a quiet tone. At our weekly interviews she always took a few moments to compose her thoughts before giving a response to the questions posed. Susan was single and between forty and forty-five years of age. After having completed high school, she postponed going into an education program; instead she entered the work force and travelled extensively for a number of years. Susan had experience tutoring adults and working with children in an after-school care program.

From the beginning of the cohort program, Susan was interested in learning about the different ways in which to involve students in hands-on learning. She envisioned her role as that of a facilitator to students' learning by providing them with opportunities for discovery learning:

> As a teacher I would like to approach my classroom with an attitude of facilitating the students in making all these discoveries rather than just teaching them facts. . . . I believe it would have to include an interactive approach. By interactive I mean not only students interacting with each other and the teacher but students interacting with their environment in a hands-on way. (Cohort Reflection Paper 1, Sept. 30/94, pp. 2-3)

Two weeks before the practicum, Susan again reiterated her belief that children needed to be provided with opportunities to assume a more active role in their learning:

> I know that they like to be involved as much as possible and that they don't like sitting quietly for long periods of time, or short periods sometimes. I know that if you're excited about something, you can get them excited about it, at certain ages anyways. And that's a big part of it. (Interview 1, Aug. 24/95, p. 5)

By the end of the first week in the practicum, Susan's planning reflected her attempts to enhance students' involvement during lessons, as she had made the observation that the students spent a great deal of time completing seat work:

> I just looked at what they're doing, and try to figure out some activities, something a little more active that they can do as well as the work book . . . . What I've noticed already is there's so much colouring, cutting, pasting. There's a lot of that. . . . I think they need the active change, and the more that they're involved, not just in sort of one area of sitting and doing work, but with their whole bodies. I think they get more out of it, and enjoy it. (Interview 2, Sept. 26/95, p. 2)

Susan's growth as a teacher was revealed in her awareness that even the most interesting lesson can become tedious for students and that she needed to be prepared with alternate activities when students began to show signs of restlessness:

> Make the lesson shorter. Even though it was interesting they had to concentrate and were ready for a change after forty-five minutes. I also could have done a very active, quick game with them for a change and then done the closure and the writing in their notebooks. (Practicum Reflections, Sept. 28/95, p. 1)

A few weeks later, Susan found herself having to curtail her desire to have students involved in hands-on learning as she felt compelled to get through the content in a lesson:

> In math today we started working with pennies. In university you would learn you should give everybody pennies and they should all do a little exercise with pennies on their desk, but we also have X number of pages to get through in the work book, and it's fairly simple stuff right now. They all have the concept already, so I didn't give them the pennies. We did a few things with real pennies at the front together, as a class, but just the time to give out all the pennies, collect them afterwards, and do those exercises--that might be too much. (Susan, Interview 4, Oct. 10/95, p. 3)

During her reflections, Susan expressed her dissatisfaction with her current approach to teaching. Consequently, she began to consider a variety of ways in which she could alter the activities in the lessons to motivate students' interest and learning:

> Boring--I felt that everything was boring today. A lot of sameness. Worksheets in Math, in L. A., in Social Studies, and in Science they had to print in their folders. P. E. was more fun because they played with a ball. No wonder kids look forward to recess so much . . . . Every lesson can't be super exciting, I suppose, but I should try to make at least one or two that way. One way to make it more interesting is by trying to ensure a

> variety of learning is going on and not worksheets all day. (Practicum Reflections, Oct. 10/95, p. 1)

Susan's growth as a teacher was demonstrated by her attempts to change the day's learning activities to reflect more variety and student participation:

> I think that I know it's important to have active change and I had one day where I had them at the desks almost all day. It just happened that every lesson was kind of a worksheet type, and after that day I thought I knew for sure this wasn't going to work. They need to have a variety and a lot of change. So I try to make a point of if I know that they're going to be sitting and doing printing for a half an hour to have something different following that, so they're not just sitting. Even if it's just going to cozy corner and reading a story together or having a phonetic game or something. (Susan, Interview 5, Oct. 17/95, p. 4)

With less than a month left in the practicum, Susan described her desire to provide students with opportunities for hands-on learning:

> I guess one thing I've wanted to do was to have the kids involved as much as possible in the learning. I wanted it to be hands-on type of activities. (Susan, Interview 9, Nov. 21/95, p. 2)

By the end of the practicum, Susan's initial belief about students' learning appeared to have been confirmed. Based on her teaching experiences, she had observed that students appreciated being given opportunities to have active participation in the lesson:

> I guess I've seen from experience now too how much they really love being actively involved . . . . But from what I've seen, mostly they enjoy hands-on things. (Interview 11, Dec. 5/95, p. 6)

An important teaching goal of Susan's that remained constant from the start of the cohort program through to the end of the practicum was to plan

lessons that would entail students' active participation. Susan's growth as a teacher was evident in her reflections on her approach to teaching and in her commitment to incorporating more hands-on learning activities for the students.

CHAPTER 3

STUDENT TEACHERS' PRE-PRACTICUM CONCEPTIONS OF PLANNING

In this chapter I present findings from the first interviews that took place two weeks prior to the start of the practicum with all six student teachers. I felt it was very important to learn their entry ideas about planning just before they began work with their cooperating teachers and practicum classes. To prepare for these initial conversations, I examined the previous year's cohort interview transcripts, reflective writing assignments, and teaching portfolios to acquire a better understanding of their overall thoughts about teaching, their responses to the field experiences, and their teaching images prior to that point in their professional growth. It became apparent during my examination of this material that although planning had not been the focus of these reflections or interviews, it was included in their responses to questions related to their ideas about teaching. For example, in their second cohort reflection paper, all six student teachers reported on the importance of planning to accommodate the various learning styles and interests of students.

During Year three of the cohort program, all six student teachers had similar experiences in both planning and teaching single lessons and whole units as they were together for six courses in both terms one and two. In the fall, each student teacher was assigned a pen pal from a Grade four class from a nearby school. Following the exchange of two letters, the student teachers went to the school and met their pen pals for the first time. During this visit, the

student teachers and their pen pals worked together on editing a research report and went on a tour of the school. This early field experience as reported during that first cohort interview made a significant impression on all six student teachers' thinking about children and learning. Most student teachers were surprised by their pen pals' range in abilities and interests and consequently found themselves having to revise their earlier ideas about children. A few weeks later, the student teachers co-planned in small groups a science lesson on various animal camoflages and taught it to a small group of students. The experience of planning a lesson and presenting it to students influenced the student teachers' thinking about planning and teaching in several ways. One student teacher claimed that this experience helped her to recognize the influence that the nature of the students and the classroom context had on teachers' instructional practices.

> I found out that kids learn in different ways and you have to make sure you incorporate that in when you are teaching something. Not just oral and not just written, it has to be everything mixed together because there are different learning styles. (Lynn, Cohort Research Interview 1, Nov.3/94, pp.16-17)

Three student teachers claimed that this experience helped them to better appreciate the amount of time and effort put into planning lessons. Another student teacher was delighted to have the opportunity to experience first-hand the thrill of seeing a lesson that she had planned and implemented successfully. As part of another cohort course assignment in the fall, the student teachers planned and taught a literature response lesson which incorporated

some drama activities with a small group of students.

At the end of September, the student teachers were asked to write their first reflection paper describing their current images of teaching. All except one of the six student teachers offered images of teaching that were based on hero teachers, former school memories, and experiences working with children in the cohort program and through work-related activities. The one student teacher unable to offer a description of her image of teaching claimed it was due in part to having been exposed to a multitude of teaching ideas and experiences and that by the end of the year (April) she hoped to have formed an image of teaching. In the first reflection paper, it was evident that having had the opportunity to interact with students and to plan and teach lessons to small groups helped the student teachers view teaching from the students' perspective with a focus on meeting the various needs and interests of their learners and engaging them in meaningful learning.

Two months later, in the student teachers' second reflection paper, I noticed that they were able to offer concrete examples of how they would attempt to meet the varied needs of learners. They presented detailed accounts of activities that they would implement on the first day of school (e. g., reading a theme-specific story, sing alongs, student-created rules). Another phenomenon common to all six student teachers was their preoccuption with planning different activities to enhance student involvement during a lesson. As well, the student teachers wanted to gain knowledge of different ways to motivate and capture students' attention during lessons. It was particularly poignant to learn

about the way two student teachers were quite taken aback to discover the amount of work involved in being a classroom teacher.

In February, the student teachers co-planned and taught an entire science unit about wheels and levers to a small group of students during six visits over a two week period. This experience of planning an entire unit proved to be quite thought provoking for all six, as they had to plan it from start to finish and consider all the various details that go into planning several lessons over a specific period of time. As well, they were conscious of the need to vary their instructional methods to accommodate the different learning styles. Next, the student teachers spent three half-days conducting structured classroom observations in their future practicum schools. As reported in their third reflection paper, some found this experience to be particularly meaningful as they were thrilled and excited over meeting teachers with instructional approaches similar to what they had envisioned themselves using in the classroom. As the fourth and final reflection assignment, the student teachers described their teaching philosophy and compiled a teaching portfolio which included activities for different subjects and grades and a resume.

During each term in Year three, I interviewed all six student teachers to discuss their views of teaching, field experiences, and various cohort assignments (reflection papers, lesson and unit plans, literacy assignment). They were unlike some preservice teachers in Year three as they had reflected on their developing teaching images on four occasions, planned activities for the first day of school, expressed their teaching philiosophy, planned and taught

several hands-on lessons and a whole science unit to students (one-on-one, small groups), and conducted structured individual observations in different classrooms at their future practicum schools. Having had extensive opportunities to observe different teachers, to plan and teach lessons and a whole unit to individual and small groups of students, and to participate in co-planning activities amongst themselves enabled them to develop a multifaceted view of teaching.

In anticipation of our first interview, I pondered several questions. Would all six student teachers share the same view of planning? Would they appreciate its complexity? Would the student teachers view it as an important part of what teachers do in classrooms? How would the student teachers view the role of the Program of Studies (the Program of Studies is the curriculum guide for all subect areas in elementary schools in the province of Alberta) in planning? I wondered whether my study would have findings similar to those of Johnston's (1992) which explored student teachers' practical knowledge. Johnston concluded that "parallel experiences in teacher education and exposure to similar texts, lectures, tutorials, and teaching materials had not resulted in the same images of teaching" (p. 133). It was through these images that the researcher hoped to gain understanding about the knowledge that student teachers gained from their practice teaching.

Examining all the data collected from the previous year had left me with the impression that at this point in their growth student teachers were preoccupied with meeting the needs of students and their learning. Therefore,

during my analysis of the findings from the first interviews, it came as a complete surprise to learn that there had been a shift in the student teachers' concern with students' learning to that of meeting prescribed learning objectives and with accountability. What had transpired over the last three months (summer break) that had led to this dramatic change in their thinking? I wondered if perhaps the knowledge that the practicum was only two weeks away and that the cooperating teachers would begin the process of evaluating the student teachers' teaching skills had had an influence on this change in their thinking. Perhaps focusing on prescribed objectives stated in the Program of Studies enabled the student teachers to feel that there was a purpose and focus to their actions in the classroom which would hopefully please their future cooperating teachers.

The focus of our conversations prior to the start of the practicum was on the student teachers' current conceptions about planning and teaching. These initial teaching ideas and expectations were revisited with the student teachers periodically throughout the practicum to identify any changes in their thinking. Of greater significance, these early conversations provided me with a deeper understanding of the student teachers' views and expectations towards teaching, as well as their own professional growth.

Pre-Practicum View of Planning

What do student teachers view as the purpose of planning and its role in students' learning?

Having examined the data collected during Year three (reflection paper assignments, unit plans, cohort interviews, teaching portfolios), I had gained some insight into the student teachers' views of planning and teaching. However, to further clarify/expand my understanding prior to their entry into the practicum, I asked them to describe what they perceived as the purpose of planning and its implications for classroom practice and students' learning. As was stated earlier, research (Borko & Livingston, 1989; Pape, 1992-1993; Sardo-Brown, 1993; Westerman, 1991) on student teachers' planning has demonstrated their preoccupation with following a Tyler (1949) model of planning with the emphasis on the achievement of specific objectives . I wanted to discover if the student teachers in my own study would have similar views as reported by other research studies on student teachers' planning or whether their complex, multifaceted understanding of teaching would be discernible in their thoughts about planning.

Evidence of a Tyler Model of Planning

My analysis of the first interview transcripts revealed that the student teachers viewed planning primarily as a way of ensuring that teachers were held accountable for students' academic achievement and meeting grade level expectations. The Program of Studies, according to these student teachers, played a critical role in planning, as it specifically identified the learner objectives and outcomes in each subject area.

The impact that prescribed curriculum has on student teachers' approach to planning was investigated in Goodman's (1985) ethnographic study of the

field experiences of 12 student teachers. Data were collected primarily from interviews, classroom observations, and the examination of various course materials. Findings indicated that these student teachers had almost no involvement in curriculum planning and decision making. More importantly, Goodman found:

> When students were asked why they were teaching what they were teaching, the most common answers were: (1) the cooperating teacher told them what to teach; (2) the lesson was next in line in the textbook; and/or (3) the curriculum was required by the school board. For the most part, students did not question the rationale or educational principles that served as the basis for curriculum decisions. Questions of why and what to teach were taken for granted and seen as someone else's job. (p. 32)

Given Goodman's (1985) findings, I was curious to investigate student teachers' entry understanding of the prescribed curriculum's role in planning. Would they voice concern with a curriculum's suitability in meeting the needs of their students and the classroom context? The following interview excerpts represent all six student teachers' views of planning and the role of the Program of Studies at the onset of the practicum.

Accountability and Efficiency

Amy claimed that without planning, teachers are unable to assess how well students grasp concepts presented. In addition, planning enables teachers to make good use of their teaching time and to be accountable for their choices and actions in the classroom:

> Well I see it as really important for evaluation purposes and evaluation of yourself and the kids and how they're coming along, because if you don't plan it, then you don't know if it happened the way you wanted to do it or if they really got it or if you've covered what you're supposed to as a

> teacher from the curriculum. If you're following a curriculum guide, then hopefully you're hitting on some things. Planning is good for efficiency in your classroom in that you get the maximum done in a day as you can. Its purpose is also for evaluation of you as a teacher for someone else to be able to come in and see your plans and what you're doing. . . . (Amy, Interview 1, Aug. 28/95, p. 6)

Order and Purpose

Similarly, Barb perceived the purpose of planning as a way of ensuring that teachers are held accountable for what happens in the classroom. According to Barb, during planning teachers identify the objective or goal of a lesson and select appropriate learning activities that will ensure that these expectations are met. Planning enables teachers to create a sense of order in their teaching and to use their time efficiently and effectively:

> I think the purpose is so that you have some kind of objectives or goals--what you want kids to learn--because if you don't have that, basically you might not achieve anything. If you go in there and just, oh well, we'll do this and do that, you might not actually achieve anything you're supposed to do at that age level at that grade, and maybe the kids don't really grow, if you don't have some kind of goal. It would be chaos. . . . I think the benefit would be, being a good teacher, if you don't plan, you probably wouldn't be a good teacher. (Barb, Interview 1, Sept. 8/95, p. 5)

According to Barb, the major advantage of planning is that it enables teachers to show students links between the subjects and plan activities that best represent these relationships:

> I think you would see maybe how they pull different things together. In a classroom where they don't plan, you probably wouldn't see links between subjects as much. You wouldn't see links between different units and stuff like that. But in a classroom where it was really planned, you could see ok, they thought about this three months ago that I'm going to do this later and this is going to fit with this. . . . (Barb, Interview 1,

Sept. 8/95, pp. 5-6)

Efficiency

Lynn viewed planning as being characteristic of what efficient teachers do in classrooms because planning provides a sense of order and structure to the learning environment. Interestingly, Lynn identified the Program of Studies as having an important role to play in planning since it specifies those topics and learner goals that are to be used. This, Lynn believed, gives teachers a concrete starting point to guide their planning:

> Well, if you didn't plan, you wouldn't, for one thing, you wouldn't seem very organized; and if you don't plan in advance, you could start on something and think, oh, I should have done this at the start as well, and then you're jumping back and forth. I think that's one of the main reasons you plan. Another reason is, if you don't, for example, look in the Program of Studies and at least plan a general outline to follow, how do you know what to teach? . . . I think planning is very important. Even if you do a minimal amount, I think it's better than nothing. (Lynn, Interview 1, Aug. 23/95, p. 5)

Establishing Goals, Sense of Control, and Certainty

Carol described planning as establishing concrete teaching goals, using time efficiently, and providing structure for students' learning. In addition, planning gives Carol a feeling of being in control and presents an image of her being organized and efficient:

> Well, it's goal setting for me as a teacher, and it could, depending on how I present it to the kids, give them an idea of what's coming. (Carol, Interview 1, Aug. 23/95, p. 4)

> I will feel less stress. I will feel more organized. The students that it matters to will feel more like I know what I'm doing, and if there's some organization for them, and some follow through. You can incorporate

> review and those kinds of things. Easier if you planned ahead what you're trying to accomplish. It just makes things easier. (Carol, Interview 1, Aug. 23/95, p. 4)

The preceding accounts are reminiscent of McCutcheon's (1980) description of experienced teachers' purpose for planning: to gain a feeling of confidence about the content of the lesson to be taught, to maintain a smooth flow to the lesson, and to anticipate potential problems in advance.

Likewise, Susan viewed planning as giving teachers a purpose and a focus to guide their practice. It is during this process, Susan believes, that teachers plan activities that will demonstrate what students have learned:

> I definitely need to know where I'm going, what the purpose is myself, and then I can get this across to the students. If I don't really know any purpose, or have any purpose, I think it would end up being a lot of just busy time. The kids might even have a lot of fun. They might learn something, but then you never know for sure. And so I think you need that purpose to know where you're going in order to get across what you want to get across and also as a sort of an instrument or something to use for measuring afterwards to see if they really have learned that which you've been aiming at teaching them. (Susan, Interview 1, Aug. 24/95, p. 6)

Fran viewed planning as providing her with something concrete to follow. This gives her a sense of comfort and security and enables her to feel as if she has some control over what takes place in the classroom. Furthermore, Fran believes that planning ensures that she is meeting curricular goals:

> The point of planning is so that I have something to follow. . . . I have something planned that goes along with the curriculum and along with the unit that I'm working on at that time. So that it'll be beneficial so that it will help me so that I'm on track with what I'm doing, I can have things written down and say this is what I'm going to do now and this is what we're going to do today, so that you're not just like pulling things out of

> the air. It has to be structured. And that's the way I work too, so I'm glad. I like it better when I have things written down. (Fran, Interview 1, Aug. 30/95, pp. 4-5)

Discussion

The view of planning offered by these student teachers appears to reflect a Tyler model of planning (1949). This linear model is based on 4 steps: (a) specify objectives, (b) select learning activities, (c) organize learning activities, and (d) specify evaluation procedures. Clark and Yinger (1977) argue that "this model is basically a rational means-ends model in which a planner's first task is to decide on the desired ends, or what is to be accomplished, and then select the appropriate learning activities to accomplish them" (p. 281). It would seem that these student teachers' pre-practicum view of planning encompassed starting with the identification of the curricular objectives to be taught and finishing with the evaluation of the success students demonstrated in accomplishing these objectives. What was noticeably absent from the accounts given by the student teachers were the roles that the nature of the students and the context of the classroom have to play in planning and classroom practice.

Eisner and Vallance (1974) prepared a frequently referenced taxonomy of curriculum orientations (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Jackson, 1992; Shubert, 1986). They are as follows: (a) a cognitive process approach, (b) curriculum as technology, (c) curriculum for self-actualization, (d) curriculum for social reconstruction, and (e) academic rationalism. In the cognitive process

approach, the aim of the curriculum is to develop a variety of cognitive skills that can be applied to a number of problem situations. The technological approach to curriculum focuses on implementing the means to achieve identified ends. A self-actualization approach to curriculum views the aim of education as providing "personally satisfying consummatory experiences" (p. 3). The social reconstructionist view of curriculum identifies school as an instrument for social change. Learning should provide personal meaning, not only for the students but society as well. Lastly, the aim of the academic rationalism orientation to curriculum is to have the learner grasp and use the ideas presented in the different disciplines (Eisner & Vallance, 1974, p. 3).

Based on the findings from the pre-practicum interviews, it appeared that at that point in their professional development the student teachers viewed curriculum from a technological standpoint, where the aim is to provide students with the means to achieve a predetermined goal. Therefore, I wondered what impact the context of the practicum classroom would have on the student teachers' initial views of curriculum and its role in their planning and classroom practice. As Aoki, Carson, and Favaro (1983) state, curriculum implementation is an interpretive act done by teachers; the teacher's view of curriculum planning is influenced by the context of the classroom. This interpretation is influenced by factors that include beliefs about student learning, societal expectations, future demands, and organizational needs.

As I compared the student teachers' views of planning with the data from the previous year, I discovered that the student teachers' concept of planning

had changed. No longer were they preoccupied with selecting activities that would best meet the needs of the students; this had been replaced with the need to meet curricular objectives. I wondered what had led to this change in the student teachers' thinking about planning. Upon reflection, I speculated that without the benefit of students or the context of a classroom, their thoughts about planning were based on experiences with the Program of Studies which is concrete, readily available, and constant. Needing something concrete to hold on to, student teachers viewed the purpose of planning as the implementation of activities for the purpose of achieving pre-determined curricular objectives. As the practicum, particularly at the start, can be quite overwhelming for student teachers, the one area that they feel they can have some control over is planning. It is during this process that student teachers can select activities that will portray them as being in control and show that their teaching has a purpose. This image of being in control and appearing competent is important for student teachers as they know that their cooperating teachers will be searching for evidence that they are accountable and responsible in their planning and instruction. This view of planning appeared to give student teachers a sense of security and, more importantly, a concrete place to begin their planning and a feeling of certainty that students will indeed learn. Therefore, I wondered if their entry technocratic orientation to curriculum would become transformed as they experienced planning in the practicum classroom. Borko and Niles (1987) argue that since student teachers have had limited opportunities to work with objectives as compared to experienced

teachers, it may make a Tyler (1949) approach to planning far more appropriate and relevant during this period of learning to teach. It is important to remember that student teachers' preoccupation with planning around curricular objectives and content was common to the findings of other researchers (Borko & Livingston, 1989; Pape, 1992-1993; Sardo-Brown, 1993; Westerman, 1991).

Despite their preoccupation with following a Tyler (1949) approach to planning, I believe that the student teachers demonstrated needs similar to those of experienced teachers. They described planning as a way of providing their teaching with a sense of direction and focus in order to cope with the complex task of learning to teach. This corresponds with Ben-Peretz's (1975) assertion that experienced teachers plan to gain some form of control and have a sense of ownership for what happens in the classroom. Therefore, cooperating teachers, during discussions with student teachers, may want to consider beginning with the topic of planning as it appears to be at the forefront of student teachers' thinking at this point in their growth as teachers. Eliciting student teachers' conceptualizations of planning may offer the opportunity for the development of a common language between cooperating teachers and student teachers and may help them to identify any current planning needs and concerns. If we wish to support and further student teachers' growth, we need to start with where they are in their conceptualization of planning and teaching and honor it as having merit and value.

In order to help student teachers move away from being exclusively preoccupied with teaching content and meeting curricular objectives, we need

to think about the different ways we can encourage them to focus on students' learning during their planning and teaching. For example, cooperating teachers could suggest to their student teachers that during their planning they select activities (e. g., class discussions) that free them to focus on students' responses rather than simply on the transmission of ideas. Furthermore, cooperating teachers may want to encourage student teachers to use open-ended questions that offer students the opportunity to share their ideas, feelings, and personal experiences. These types of activities may help student teachers to develop a rapport with their students and recognize that the nature of the students and classroom context should inform their instructional practices.

Findings from these first interviews during the practicum led me to wonder what I would uncover in the subsequent weeks as these student teachers engaged in the process of becoming teachers. Would they demonstrate a change in their thinking about planning, or would the preconceptions persist unchanged throughout the twelve week field experience? What impact would the nature of the students and the context of the classroom have on student teachers' views of curricula in their classroom practice?

CHAPTER 4

STUDENT TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS OF COOPERATING TEACHERS' ROLE IN PLANNING

In this section I present the student teachers' expressed expectations of their cooperating teachers. What is notable but not surprising in these findings is the student teachers' belief that their future cooperating teachers had a significant role to play in their learning about planning and instruction. The student teachers' initial expectations are then compared with what they reported as their cooperating teachers' expectations of them for the practicum. What is particularly significant in these accounts is the way some cooperating teachers expressed their expectations of student teachers and the influence this had on their sense of security and confidence.

Student Teachers' "Wish Lists"

What are student teachers' expectations of the cooperating teacher's role in their planning?

In order to add to my understanding of the student teachers' entry views of planning, I felt it was important to learn their initial ideas about the role they hoped cooperating teachers would play in their professional development. At the onset of the practicum, the desire to be provided with concrete models of planning was common to all six student teachers. They wanted their cooperating teachers to share concrete examples of different ways to plan lessons and to be forthcoming with materials and teaching ideas. More importantly, the student teachers felt that having the chance to preview different

models of planning would place them in a better position to meet the cooperating teachers' expectations for planning and instruction.

Amy hoped that her cooperating teacher would provide some models of planning to give her a clear sense of what was expected. This hope did not appear to be based on any desire to clarify and expand her understanding of planning. It seemed to reflect her desire to discover the planning preferences of her cooperating teacher:

> Some samples would be nice, especially if they've had student teachers before, of things that have worked, that they have liked. Maybe if they keep copies of things, then you can look at that and go from there. (Amy, Interview 1, Aug. 28/95, p. 9)

Similarly, Lynn wanted her cooperating teacher to share some models of planning as well as her own approach to planning and the rationale underlying any changes made during the implementation of a lesson. Lynn also hoped that her future cooperating teacher might demonstrate and explain how she uses the curriculum guides in her planning for classroom practice:

> I think her responsibilities are to show me what she expects out of me before she wants me to hand lesson plans into her. I want to see examples. I want to see what she expects. I want to see something before she teaches it and then I want her to show me after if she followed that, and if not, why she made the changes, because I don't know how I'm supposed to know that just by doing it. I mean, you will know just from doing it, if you do it for a long time. But we don't. Let's face it, we only have a few weeks. . . . I think she should show me, if she uses the curriculum guides really closely, and how she does it. I think that's important in planning. And, I don't know, I think she has a lot to show me, in my opinion. (Lynn, Interview 1, Aug. 23/95, pp. 7-8)

The preceding account concurs with Barker and Desrochers' (1992) advice to cooperating teachers that, in their role as mentors, they start with having the student teacher observe their teaching of several lessons demonstrating various effective instructional and managerial techniques. These should be followed by discussions with the student teacher about the underlying rationale of the instructional strategies used.

Fran was the only one of the six student teachers to view her cooperating teacher's role as one of furthering her understanding and knowledge of the complexities involved in planning. She wanted to begin her planning by doing it jointly with her cooperating teacher in order to clarify and enhance her knowledge of what is involved in planning for a real classroom. Like Lynn and Amy, Fran wanted to be informed in advance of her cooperating teacher's expectations for planning to ensure that she met them. Interestingly, Fran viewed her future cooperating teacher's expected feedback on her teaching as an integral part of helping her to plan for future lessons:

> I think my main concern or fear or whatever you want to call it is that she will help me to get started with planning. It would be nice if we could in some spare time plan a lesson together, just so I can get practice at it and know what it involves and what I would have to put into this lesson. So that would be one thing. And also I'd like her to lay out her expectations as to what I should be doing in a lesson so that I'm not guessing what will make her happy, and then afterwards to get some feedback. Hopefully it'll be positive, but I guess constructive criticism too helps to make it better next time right. (Fran, Interview 1, Aug. 30/95, p. 7)

The student teachers' expressed expectations of the cooperating teachers' role in their growth in planning are similar to those expressed in

McAlpine's (1988) study that examined student teachers' learning from their observation of and interviews with experienced teachers. The findings revealed that it was unrealistic to expect student teachers to understand the pedagogical knowledge used based solely on classroom observations. Instead, cooperating teachers needed to identify and share the purpose for their selection of particular instructional strategies in the classroom.

A major expectation that Carol had of her future cooperating teacher was that she would share her knowledge of materials, resources, and instructional strategies and that at the start of the practicum, the cooperating teacher would provide her with a general outline of her upcoming teaching assignment. Carol also expected that her cooperating teacher would provide regular feedback to assist in her professional growth:

> Well, I think that they are there to give me some direction and give me some materials or ideas that they have done before. I think in your first year, or at this stage, what I lack is knowledge of a lot of materials that are out there, and if a teacher has got them at her fingertips, I expect her to make me aware of them. (Pause) And I also expect some, at least in the beginning of my practicum, some sitting down with me and helping me get sort of a bird's-eye view of what the whole year is going to be like. . . . And then, I expect, maybe not day-to-day, if it doesn't work out day-to-day, at least, you know, weekly feedback on what I've been doing. (Pause) If she has constructive comments, or asking me how I feel about it, or telling me if I did something wrong, or if I did something that could have been done more effectively, things like that. (Carol, Interview 1, Aug. 23/95, p. 6)

The preceding accounts are reminiscent of Bush's (1986) claim that since cooperating teachers spend a substantial amount of time with student teachers in classrooms, they should act as their major source of information for

instructional strategies, planning ideas, materials, and resources.

Barb expected her cooperating teacher to offer guidance in her planning and teaching and, more importantly, to provide support and encouragement:

> Mostly just I guess advice, like being able to help out, how to approach things, what things I have to think about. And to be supportive, like not overly critical but be able to help me out, but also be positive like support me, but also if I ask her questions I hope she's willing to help me out with any difficult things I face. (Pause) I hope she's enthusiastic about helping me too. (Barb, Interview 1, Sept. 8/95, p. 7)

Interestingly, Susan was the only student teacher who wanted her practicum to serve as a type of apprenticeship that involved acquiring a great deal of knowledge about teaching from the observations of an experienced teacher in a classroom. Susan was particularily interested in learning about some effective classroom management strategies and how to translate the curricula into a year's worth of instruction from this experience:

> I'm hoping, really, to learn a lot from my co-operating teacher. I don't know what's going to happen exactly, but what I would like to see is an apprenticeship which doesn't happen right now, but that's kind of how I see the practicum a little bit. That's why I would like to learn a lot from her: just the way she does things, even the way she handles behavioural problems in the classroom. . . . And also just, I'm hoping that I can come out with an idea of how a teacher really does look at a whole year, or whole half a year, or whatever, and decide which things from the program of studies are important and help focus on them. . . . (Susan, Interview 1, Aug. 24/95, pp. 8-9)

From these accounts, it appeared that at the onset of the practicum the student teachers were preoccupied with being presented with a variety of models of planning which would provide them with something concrete with which to start thinking about planning for the practicum classroom. Moreover,

they wanted to have specific and concrete examples of the type of planning that would be expected of them by their cooperating teachers. At this point in their professional development, the student teachers appeared to view their cooperating teachers as having a wealth of experience and knowledge about teaching and from this perspective believed it was natural to expect that they would be more than willing to share this with them.

The expectations of these student teachers highlight the challenge faced by some cooperating teachers working with student teachers whose beliefs are in contrast to their own. For example, student teachers may enter the practicum with the view that the role of cooperating teachers is to show them how to teach; some cooperating teachers, in contrast, may believe that they will learn best by doing. It is also apparent from the student teachers' comments at the beginning of the practicum that they are still experiencing themselves as students and are perhaps hoping or expecting to be "taught" by the cooperating teachers. I looked forward to seeing how this view of the cooperating teachers' role in their growth as teachers would unfold in the context of the classroom. The following section examines student teachers' reports on the various ways cooperating teachers did share their expectations for planning with the student teachers.

Cooperating Teachers' Communication of Expectations for Planning

What did the cooperating teachers share or discuss with student teachers about planning and teaching?

By the second week of the practicum, I wanted to find out what actually happened when the student teachers sat down with their cooperating teachers to discuss teaching. I found that in contrast to the student teachers' initial "wish list" of specific expectations of their future cooperating teachers (how to use the curriculum guides, examples of plans, teaching ideas, materials), once in the practicum they no longer were as concerned about these matters. Instead they simply expressed their appreciation for whatever direction, comments, examples, and suggestions that were offered during discussions about planning and teaching.

Upon the student teachers' entry into the practicum classrooms, three of the six cooperating teachers appeared to deliberately reduce the uncertainty of the situation by communicating their expectations. Common to all three of these cooperating teachers was their attempt to decrease the ambiguity of the situation by informing their student teachers about specific teaching assignments for the practicum. This discussion, particularly at the beginning of the practicum, helped to give the student teachers a sense of clarity and focus for the upcoming weeks. Two cooperating teachers specified the topics that their student teachers would be responsible for planning and implementing within a particular period of time. Knowing what they will be teaching eased student teachers' feelings of uncertainty and provided them with a sense of direction to focus their attention and work. In some cases, the cooperating teachers demonstrated a great deal of sensitivity by focusing their discussions around the present needs of their student teachers. For instance, one

cooperating teacher recognized that her student teacher's current and most pressing preoccupation was with classroom management and subsequently chose to focus their initial planning discussions around this area of concern. The following examples represent the various experiences of the student teachers with regard to early communication with their cooperating teachers.

Providing Clear And Specific Direction To Reduce Ambiguity

Two cooperating teachers shared their expectations for planning with their student teachers in a clear and specific manner. Barb's cooperating teacher shared her expectation that she be prepared to put a significant amount of time and energy into the practicum. She let Barb know that she expected her lesson plans initially to be in great detail until certain aspects of classroom practice had become routine. Additionally, Barb believed that her cooperating teacher expected her to demonstrate a certain amount of creativity in her planning and teaching:

> She just mostly told me she expects a lot, so I know that a lot of time is a big one for her, I think. She kind of told me about planning, what she wants to see for lesson plans. She wants to see very detailed lesson plans in the beginning and then later we'll start going through and picking out the things that I don't have to plan anymore, so that's one thing. Detailed lesson plans, a lot of time (pause) she hasn't said this, but my guess is probably a little bit of creativity. I don't think she wants just the standard "Okay kids, here are some worksheets." (Barb, Interview 2, Sept. 28/95, p. 7)

As I re-examined Barb's expectations of her cooperating teacher prior to her entry into the practicum, I noted her desire to be given advice, support, and encouragement rather than harsh criticism. Most of all, Barb wanted her

cooperating teacher to be enthusiastic about having a student teacher. As well, she wanted to be given advice on how to plan, use the curriculum, and learn some effective classroom management strategies. I wondered if Barb's cooperating teacher's expectation for detailed lesson plans at the start was an attempt to ensure that Barb gave consideration to the numerous details required to implement a successful lesson.

Susan's second cooperating teacher, during the switch of classroom placements (almost two months later), chose to begin their planning discussion around those topics that she would be responsible for teaching in the remaining weeks rather than focusing on the processes involved in planning. At this point in her professional development, Susan did not appear to be concerned with learning the specificities of planning lessons. Rather she wanted to know the exact topics of study that she would be responsible for in the remaining weeks of the practicum in order to have time to prepare lessons. These findings led me to wonder if the action taken by her cooperating teacher was based on her belief that by this point in the practicum (three quarters of the way through) student teachers should have acquired the necessary knowledge needed to plan and implement successful lessons. The preceding account appears to suggest that this is an example of a cooperating teacher's ability to effectively perceive her student teacher's present need for focus and purpose in her final weeks:

> That's one thing that I really appreciate about Terry [cooperating teacher] is that the second day I was in there she sat down and said, "Okay, we have to figure out when you're going to be teaching what and it's going to

> go really fast, so you're going to have to work it out quickly." So we sat down and she said, "You're going to start with this on this day." So you know it's pretty much laid out. It still makes me panic, but at least I know. So I really appreciated that. (Susan, Interview 7, Nov. 7/95, p. 3)

Interestingly, Susan was the only one of the six student teachers who had difficulty describing her expectations of her future cooperating teachers during the first pre-practicum interviews. She did, however, anticipate that it would be the cooperating teacher's responsibility to determine which topics she would be teaching. Therefore, when her second cooperating teacher did just that, it appeared to be congruent with her earlier conceptions of the cooperating teachers' role in student teachers' professional growth. Finally, during that initial interview, Susan went on to mention that she hoped her cooperating teacher would be willing to share her knowledge of resources, materials, and instructional strategies.

Giving Concrete Examples of Planning

The following accounts represent the various ways three cooperating teachers attempted to meet their student teachers' need for concrete examples to guide their initial efforts at planning lessons. Lynn's cooperating teacher shared her own experience as a beginning teacher trying to plan. She told Lynn that for her first few years of teaching, her planning was based on following the textbook and the teaching ideas and advice of other teachers:

> I said, "Well, okay, here I am, a first year teacher, and I'm going into a classroom. How on earth do I know what I'm going to teach?" And she says, "Go by the textbook for your first year, until you get a feel for things. Talk to teachers around you," and that's basically what she did. And then she said she did that for her first two years, actually, and then after that,

> she said, you start to learn what has to be done, you listen to other teachers, what they talk about . . . (Lynn, Interview 2, Sept. 25/95, p. 9)

Of all six student teachers, Lynn was the only one to offer a detailed and lengthy list of expectations of her future cooperating teacher. Prior to her own attempts at planning, Lynn wanted to be shown examples of lesson plans and receive step-by-step instruction about how to go about planning and delivering a lesson. Lynn's rationale for having such a vast number of expectations of her cooperating teacher was that the time available to learn about teaching in the practicum was limited. Interestingly, during the second interview, Lynn shared her dissatisfaction with her cooperating teacher's response to her questions and would have preferred to be shown step-by-step how to go about using the Program of Studies in her planning:

> I don't know, I guess I was looking for a more concrete answer, like go to the Program of Studies, pick out your main topics, look how much is on each topic, decide how many weeks. That's the kind of answer I was looking for. (Lynn, Interview 2, Sept. 25/95, p. 9)

The preceding account highlights the differences in perspective between cooperating and student teachers. What student teachers may think will be helpful or may want can be quite different from what cooperating teachers may think is worthwhile information to share with them.

Fran's cooperating teacher, in their discussion about planning and instruction, used the specific learning needs of the students as a concrete example for adopting a particular instructional approach:

> Planning and teaching. One of the things about teaching is that, especially with these students, they have to be very structured. (Fran, Interview 2, Oct. 2/95, p. 3)

Prior to the start of the practicum, Fran's expectations of her cooperating teacher were that she would be willing to show her how to plan and would do it jointly to start with in order to help her gain an understanding of all that is involved in planning a lesson. Fran's cooperating teacher's actions provide an example of an effective way to help student teachers remember to focus their planning around meeting the needs of the students rather than on the content.

Amy's cooperating teacher, in their discussion following the observation of a lesson, deliberately and purposefully posed questions to facilitate her understanding about the processes involved in implementing a lesson:

> She will do a lesson up here and then she'll come back if I'm sitting and observing or writing things down or whatever. She'll ask me if I have any questions. Do I notice this certain strategy that she used? What did I think about that child who acted up and what she did? She really brings attention to it also and lets me talk about it, so that's really good. (Amy, Interview 2, Sept. 22/95, p. 3)

It would seem that Amy's cooperating teacher deliberately sought ways to have her reflect on what she observed during a lesson. This experience appeared to be congruent with Amy's earlier expectations that her cooperating teachers would possess vast amounts of knowledge about teaching and children and volunteer to share this information with their student teachers.

Finding a Common Topic and Building a Relationship

From the start, Carol's focus was on classroom management as she was placed in a large class (over thirty students). Therefore, it was important for her sense of comfort and peace of mind to find a behaviour management system that she could quickly implement with immediate results. Classroom management was a common concern to both Carol and her cooperating teacher as was evident in the discipline program (check mark system) already in place upon her arrival in the classroom. This provided Carol and her cooperating teacher with a common topic to discuss during their planning talks. More importantly it served as a starting point to begin building their relationship, as both of them were having to find ways to deal effectively with this issue. Carol's cooperating teacher, I believe, demonstrated a great deal of intuitiveness and thoughtfulness by providing her with the freedom to modify the existing classroom management program to better suit her needs and teaching style:

> I guess the first week . . . management was so much in my mind, behaviour management, that I wanted to make sure that we were getting compatible people [referring to the small group activities] . . . (Carol, Interview 2, Sept. 28/95, p. 4)

> About teaching, well, we talked a lot about behaviour management, cause I tried to change her system a little bit and she was open to that. And then we've been discussing it continually, because I planned this check mark system and now it seems like it's a little bit out of hand. . . . (Carol, Interview 2, Sept. 28/95, p. 5)

> It's challenging, but in some ways it's been good because almost every day, if I decide to modify something there's improvement, so I haven't lost all hope yet. And I told myself, I'm only with this class for three weeks, I

> want, by the end of these three weeks, to have a reasonable management system figured out. (Carol, Interview 2, Sept. 28/95, p. 9)

In this section I have examined the way student teachers experienced cooperating teachers' expression of expectations for the practicum. For some student teachers it was a relief to be informed very early in the practicum about what would be expected of them during the field experience. Examples of the various approaches, taken by some cooperating teachers to cultivate a feeling of security and safety or to provide their student teachers with a sense of clarity and focus for the upcoming weeks, were provided. What was particularly surprising were the differences between what student teachers thought would be helpful for their growth as teachers and what the cooperating teachers actually offered. As well, I presented accounts of the different approaches taken by the cooperating teachers to help their student teachers understand what was involved in planning and teaching. The next chapter presents an overview of the planning experiences of the six student teachers during the practicum.

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING DURING THE PRACTICUM

When the student teachers began planning in the practicum classrooms, they were able to use the knowledge and experience gained from the various field experiences they participated in as part of the cohort courses. They had had several opportunities during Year three to plan and teach individual lessons to small groups of students and to co-plan and teach an entire science unit. Furthermore, they had spent three half-days conducting structured observations in classrooms at their future practicum schools. Finally, as part of the various reflection paper assignments, the student teachers presented different ideas on how to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students and plan activities for the first day of school. Consequently, I was curious to learn how the student teachers' complex, multifaceted understanding of teaching would be reflected in their planning experiences in the practicum classroom.

Different Beginnings

What were some of the ways student teachers were introduced to planning in the practicum?

Planning Right From the Start

Two of the six student teachers were asked to plan lessons very early in the practicum. As they had been in the classroom for only a short period of time, they attempted to plan lessons without the benefit of having adequate knowledge of classroom procedures, characteristics of students, resources

available, assessment methods, or a personal teaching style. I wondered what this experience of planning so close to the start of the practicum would be like for these two student teachers and how their early introduction to planning would compare to the other four student teachers' more gradual introduction to the process of planning lessons for classroom students. Their cooperating teachers began by having them plan activities that were both familiar and manageable. Shulman (1987) states that as teachers gain experience teaching, the acquisition of several forms of knowledge influences their planning and classroom practice. During planning, teachers rely on the following types of knowledge:

> -- content knowledge;
> -- general pedagogical knowledge, with special reference to those broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter;
> -- curriculum knowledge, with particular grasp of the materials and programs that serve as "tools of the trade" for teachers;
> -- pedagogical content knowledge, that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding;
> -- knowledge of learners and their characteristics;
> -- knowledge of educational contexts, ranging from the workings of the group or classroom, the governance and financing of school districts, to the character of communities and cultures; and
> -- knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds. (pp. 7-8)

Common to all six student teachers' planning experiences were the following three themes: the challenge of pacing lessons and setting criteria for students' performance, the tendency to make assumptions about students' capablities and interests, and the impact that their limited knowledge of certain

subject matter had on their planning.

The following examples represent the manner in which two student teachers were introduced to planning in the practicum. After having spent the first few days of the practicum observing the class, Carol's cooperating teacher asked her to plan art and math lessons for the next day. On the one hand, Carol appeared anxious to teach; however, she would have preferred more notice so that she could have better prepared her lessons. Unfortunately, Carol chose not to share these feelings with her cooperating teacher and perhaps lost the opportunity to have had more time and support:

> This afternoon the class had music, so Donna [cooperating teacher] and I had some time to plan for tomorrow. I will finally start teaching or "leading" the class in an activity. I'll also be taking an hour's math lesson, plus an hour's art class. I'm not thrilled about the hour of art because, though it's not a bad activity, it's not my idea and it seems too similar to what they did last week (e.g., drawing with pencil crayons). I guess I should have said, "I'd rather wait until next week in order to plan better and collect some supplies." (Carol, Reflections from Practicum, Sept. 25/95, p. 1)

Lynn, on the other hand, planned her first spelling lessons with only the knowledge acquired from her preparation courses and previous school experiences, as she had been too preoccupied with other things to spend the time observing the cooperating teacher's spelling lesson. As a result, her first attempt at planning and teaching a spelling lesson was not what Lynn had hoped for, and she planned in future lessons to avoid a repeat of these mistakes:

> Okay, it's a spelling lesson and it's the third one that I've done. It's unit four. Karen [cooperating teacher] did the first one. And, basically, I'm

> learning from my mistakes. (Lynn, Interview 2, Sept. 25/95, p. 1)
>
> My first time, I was really nervous, content wise I was nervous because I didn't know what she expected, because the first time she did spelling, I wasn't really paying attention because I had started my reflections, and it was our first official day, so there was a lot of stuff that I had to fill out and do, so my first day kind of went in a blur, so I couldn't remember exactly what she did. (Lynn, Interview 2, Sept. 25/95, p. 5)

Taking It Slowly

The following interview excerpts illustrate the ways in which the other four student teachers had more gradual introductions to the process of planning in their first practicum classroom. Amy described how at the beginning she was responsible for planning only a small part of the lesson as she taught it jointly with the cooperating teacher. Amy appreciated this carefully structured approach, as she was responsible for only a limited number of teaching duties. This enabled her to continue to learn from her cooperating teacher:

> I think just the increase of chances that I've been having to slowly be up there, and it started off very minor with just the one. I just did handwriting and I didn't do the lead-up to it. Joan [cooperating teacher] introduced it. "OK, we're doing handwriting," and then all of a sudden it's me. And then afterwards, I think she even told them to hand it in. She did the beginning and the closure and everything and it was just the lesson and that worked very well because you just don't know . . . . I got a chance to see that and then try it out myself and see, and then slowly move onto more. (Amy, Interview 3, Sept. 29/95, p. 7)

In another interview, Amy discussed her cooperating teacher's offer of support and help during the planning of an upcoming science unit. Amy's cooperating teacher made a point of beginning their planning discussion with the curricular goals that needed to be met and some possible instructional strategies. Amy's

cooperating teacher even offered to help her plan the first lesson; however, Amy was eager to try to plan it by herself. When I re-examined Amy's first cohort interview, it was apparent that her understanding of planning and teaching had been enhanced by having had the opportunity to plan and teach a lesson successfully to a small group of students. Perhaps Amy wished to experience this feeling of success again and therefore chose to plan her first lesson independently of her cooperating teacher:

> For the science I talked to her, right away, and that's just fine, like no problems at all. She told me kind of what she was thinking. And then for this next lesson that I'm doing, this one's kind of going lesson by lesson, because they're quite big each time. So we talked about the first one and then she had given me some ideas of what else we kind of need to cover. And I'll try and plan this next one on my own, just by what I have. So I asked the question first and got a kind of a general overview and she gave me ideas for the first lesson. Like this is what she was thinking of doing . . . She also just asked me, do you have any questions about the science? Do you want to talk to me about it right now? Or do you want to just do it? And so I decided I would just do it. (Amy, Interview 10, Nov. 24/95, p. 4)

Barb's cooperating teacher made her introduction gradual by having her begin her planning with a small group of students and offered the use of her teaching materials:

> I did some poetry stuff, but she already had the poems. I just planned what to do with them, but that was just taking different groups out of the classroom, like a group of ten or whatever. (Barb, Interview 2, Sept. 28/ 95, p. 1)

Fran's cooperating teacher eased her introduction into teaching by assigning her the responsibility of planning for specific classroom routines (e.g., weekly spelling lesson and tests). As a result, Fran experienced some teaching

success early in the practicum and got positive feedback from her cooperating teacher:

> Today was the first time during my student teaching that I was able to or had the chance to get up in front of a class. I had the privilege of doing a spelling test with them (or actually leading them in a spelling test). (Fran, Reflections from Practicum, Sept. 22/95, p. 1)

> Today I did another spelling lesson with the students. They listened really well to me and they seemed to work very diligently. I also received a good review from Mary [cooperating teacher] on how my lesson went. (Fran, Reflections from Practicum, Sept. 25/95, p. 1)

Susan's cooperating teacher let her know very early in the practicum that she would be gradually introduced to teaching and that she would start planning with only a small number of lessons. Furthermore, she told Susan which units she would be responsible for planning and implementing and offered an example of a unit plan that she would implement and could use as a guide during her own planning for an upcoming science unit:

> Well, she just said that I would get into it slowly and gradually be teaching some lessons, here and there, and here's one unit plan of hers that I can use. She's already suggested I do the science one. She thought that would be the most fun, so I've been working on that. It's a unit on colour. I' m going to be teaching lessons on that till the end of October. So, that's about half done. (Susan, Interview 2, Sept. 26/95, p. 8)

Tabachnick, Popkewitz, and Zeichner (1979-80) conducted a study that examined student teachers' formation of professional teaching perspectives during the practicum. The researchers claimed, based on findings from classroom observations and interviews, that under the direction of some cooperating teachers, student teachers' actions in the classroom were narrow

and limited in scope, thereby resulting in mechanical and routine teaching practices. Unlike the findings reported by the preceding researchers, I believe these accounts aptly portray that by having student teachers begin their planning with activities that are both known and manageable, they are more likely to experience success and develop a positive teaching image. Asking student teachers to plan lessons with only a limited knowledge of the classroom, the learning needs of the students, available resources, and instructional routines may serve to hinder their understanding of the processes involved in planning within the context of a classroom. As we have learned, teachers' acquisition of various forms of knowledge about instruction and classroom practice is developed over time and with teaching experience. In the following examples, the student teachers' lack of teaching experience and knowledge of students and their impact on their planning is presented.

Opportunities to Revise Personal Practical Knowledge of Classrooms

Connelly and Clandinin (1988, p. 25) use the term "personal practical knowledge" to describe a "teacher's knowing of a classroom." This knowledge is derived from teachers' personal and professional experiences used during planning and teaching in the classroom. At this point in their professional growth, student teachers have developed their own personal practical knowledge of classrooms from prior school experiences and the various cohort field experiences.

Barb reported that she anticipated that her lack of knowledge and experience with students, particularly at the primary level, would make it a challenge to plan lessons, as she was unsure of their capabilities:

> One thing that I was thinking about that would be tough is the timing, because when you haven't been working in a classroom with a certain age level, it's probably hard to know how long it is going to take this group to cut these things out. (Barb, Interview 1, Sept. 8/95, p. 6)

As a result, Barb's lack of knowledge of students led her to plan lessons that were content-heavy to ensure the students were occupied:

> Sometimes I find it so hard, because sometimes I think, "Oh, this will take them half an hour" and it takes them ten minutes. I'm like, "Oh no!" And sometimes I think it'll take them ten minutes and it takes them a half an hour. So I plan a lot of extra stuff, but sometimes we only get through two of them or whatever. (Barb, Interview 6, Oct. 24/95, p. 2)

> Sometimes I have no idea how long something is going to take, and I'm always scared I'm going to go way over and not really have a sense of completion to things, or I'm going to run out of things to do and be left with half an hour. So I worry about that stuff. (Barb, Interview 8, Nov. 21/95, p. 7)

However, as Barb gained teaching experience, her expanding knowledge of the students and the classroom informed her practices:

> It surprised me how many little things you have to be thinking about all the time. But I'm also surprised by how quickly that starts to become more natural, because a lot of things I don't even bother thinking about them anymore. A lot of the stuff I put in that little planning web, even I don't write all that down for every lesson plan, you know? I could pretty well just write do this and I could do it, whereas before I would have to be like, "How are they going to get the books?" It's just become easier and easier. (Barb, Interview 10, Dec. 5/95, p. 4)

Similarly, Fran's lesson plans were initially content-heavy, and it was at her cooperating teacher's request that she reduced the number of activities planned for one lesson:

> With my lesson plans, when Mary [cooperating teacher] said she'd like me to cut them down to a page, like back to back kind of thing, I've been working on it. I've been trying to, 'cause I try to fit too much in and I don't get through the lesson anyway, so why have it in there? (Fran, Interview 3, Oct. 13/95, p. 4)

As Fran gained more experience teaching in this particular classroom with its high number of special needs students, her planning reflected an awareness of selecting activities that were more structured:

> I think to look at what the kids are like and to think about that. And even just this morning I was looking over my lesson again and I'm thinking like with this one worksheet we're going to be doing today in health, I was thinking would this one be better, or would this other one on the other side be better, because I'm not sure how they'll be able to handle it. But I chose this one because it has more examples and stuff that they can follow, instead of just being kind of open-ended and it's got more structure to it. So I guess just thinking about the needs of the students and helping them, and are they going to be able to handle this and stuff like that. (Fran, Interview 4, Oct. 16/95, p. 1)

In Lynn's case, she cited her lack of teaching experience as the cause for her failure to consider the implications behind any unexpected change to a lesson. It was afterwards that Lynn realized how these changes needed to be addressed if the lesson was to be successfully implemented:

> One thing that stands out in my mind today is when Karen [cooperating teacher] and I were reading the novel to the class. Today was so nice out, that we went outside to read to them, and phys-ed followed so we just stayed out there. I noticed a couple of things. First, Karen had the equipment monitors bring out the stuff we needed for phys-ed right away

> so no one would have to go back in . . . . Second, our phys-ed lesson started with some things that needed to be explained using a chalkboard. Karen did this before we went outside. . . . If this would have been my first time doing this on my own, I am not sure that I would have thought to explain the football plays on the board before going outside and to get someone to bring out the equipment. (Lynn, Reflections from Practicum, Sept. 26/95, p. 1)

After spending more time in the classroom teaching, Lynn's expanding knowledge of students was evident in her journal reflections as she considered the need to vary the activities in her lessons:

> I learned that if you are going to have students do a lot of marking, you need to break it up so they don't have to do it all at once. (Lynn, Reflections from Practicum, Oct. 3/95, p. 1)

Like Barb and Lynn, Amy was unable during her planning of an upcoming mathematics lesson to predict the amount of time that her students would need to complete an activity. Therefore, as a precaution, Amy examined the next lesson in order to be prepared should she need to introduce it to the class:

> My main concern was if I was covering enough or if this was going to be over in five minutes, but there's forty questions, but to me, that would take no time, but how long is it going to take the kids? So I wasn't quite sure how far to go, so I looked ahead, I didn't write up what I would do, but I looked ahead in case everyone was done and you have to keep going to the next page or whatever, but I think it will be okay. (Amy, Interview 2, Sept. 22/95, p. 2)

Less than a month into the practicum, Amy's knowledge of her students was such that she was able to disregard the suggestions offered in the teacher's guide as she believed the students would find these too simple:

> The guide book said to use manipulatives and to show the trading and everything, but I thought they really didn't need that, like sometimes if you get too simple, then you'll just lose them because they're just going to be bored. (Amy, Interview 4, Oct. 6/95 , p. 5)

A dilemma that Susan faced in her teaching was how to address the problem of those students who finished their work earlier than expected, as she had not considered this possiblity during her planning:

> Maybe it was just me rushing around trying to stamp sheets, and some were done, and some weren't done. That's what I find the hardest, is when the early ones finish, and then the other ones aren't done, how to occupy those ones. (Susan, Interview 2, Sept. 26/95 , p. 5)

Susan continued to struggle with this problem. A few weeks later, however, she appeared to realize the need to have additional activities planned for students who finished early:

> But I still have a bit of a problem in math because they do a page at a time then we read the directions together, so it's not really long enough to go, send them to a centre or even to get a book. It's almost a waste of time because then I have to pull them back again if I want to read the next page of instruction. So, I'm still not sure. I suppose I maybe should have some extra sheets, or something ready for them, just a hand-out that they can do. (Susan, Interview 4, Oct. 10/95, p. 6)

After having taught for over a month, Susan attempted to allow her students a greater degree of independence during an art lesson. However, she realized that especially at the primary level this required specific instructions:

> I thought I had it really worked out well with the paints and the kids and today we did another thing with paint and it was just chaos, but I know that compared to the first time, the first time I had everything very directed. Pick up your paintbrush, put it in the paint. And I thought, "Well I don't want to do that controlling. Let them have a little freedom." There was

> paint all over the place--people were spilling it on their desks and on their papers--and so I think maybe you can't be that free in the primary grades with paint if you don't want a mess. I guess I kind of learned a lesson with that. (Susan, Interview 6, Oct. 24/95 , p. 8)

Carol described a recent teaching experience with a social studies lesson and how she had to make some unexpected modifications to her lesson plan because during her planning she had overlooked the limited resources available to the students:

> No, I never did the webbing before, except yesterday when some of them were asking what can we do, and I realized then we don't have any books to use and they're not finding enough information in the Gage atlas. I had to think of something they could do right away, so I thought, well, think of what you know already and then write it. That's where the web idea came from so I decided to introduce it to everyone. (Carol, Interview 2, Sept. 28/95, p. 11)

Only a few weeks later, Carol's planning reflected the way she had used her growing knowledge of the students' needs and abilities to prepare activities for the lesson:

> And I made this information sheet up because I was anticipating that they may not be listening completely to what their group members were saying because they haven't had a lot of practice doing that and when we tried to do a book talk last week, there was hardly anyone listening and the people weren't speaking loud enough from the front, so I knew we were going to have to work on those things for this presentation. (Carol, Interview 4, Oct. 12/95, p. 1)

From these accounts, it would seem that the lack of teaching experience and the limited knowledge of students were common to all six student teachers and affected their understanding of planning in a classroom with practicum students. More importantly, as they began to acquire experience teaching and

began to expand their knowledge of the students, this became evident in their selection of activities and instructional strategies in their planning, similar to the processes used by experienced teachers.

Making Assumptions About Students' Prior Knowledge

According to Grossman (1989), a disparity exists between what student teachers assume students know and what they actually do know. This assumption is based on their prior school experiences and the view that students share a similar learning style. The tendency towards making this assumption about students is presented in the following example. Initially, when Carol assigned a group research report, she did so on the premise that students at this grade level would have had prior experience with this type of activity. However, upon observing their attempts at writing a research report, Carol began to question her initial assumption of students' prior knowledge:

> I'm feeling quite apprehensive about the social groups. I didn't know these kids well enough to know what they could produce. Some groups have produced some nice visual work, but most don't seem clear about the fact that they are expected to do a written report too. Don't they know what a written report is? They should from Grade three and four and I gave them ideas on the board on Wednesday on how to organize a written report . . . but reflecting back on that lesson, I don't think I checked back for understanding. (Carol, Reflections from Practicum, Oct. 6/95, p. 2)

Similarly, during her planning of a health lesson, Fran assumed that students had had previous experience writing multiple-choice tests. However, she found out during the lesson that the students were unfamiliar with this type of examination and consequently had to readminister the test at a later date:

> On Friday we started with fire safety. I'd given them a little quiz, but then I realized that they really don't know how to do multiple choice, because that's what it was, and Mary [cooperating teacher] told me that afterwards. So, today I'm going to go through the first one with them, and we'll give it to them again, and then we'll see. We'll do the first letter and then I'll pass it out, and stuff like that. (Fran, Interview 10, Nov. 27/95, p. 1)

Amy, like Fran, made the assumption that her students were experienced at writing a math test and therefore she did not need to plan for its administration. It was during the giving of the test that Amy realized that she had taken this for granted and should have considered some strategies to help students feel more at ease with doing this task. Amy claimed that the experience served as an important reminder that she still had much to learn about teaching:

> I should have just let Joan [cooperating teacher] handle the Test of eight today from the beginning. It was the first time the students encountered it. They were a little uptight, and she has obviously dealt with this scenario in previous years . . . . I realized again today that I have a long way to go. (Amy, Reflections from Practicum, Oct. 16/95, p. 1)

During her planning of a math lesson, Susan had included partner work on the assumption that the students would know the expectations for behavior during this type of activity. It was during the lesson that Susan realized that she had overlooked the need to inform the students in advance of the expectations for behavior:

> Math. What a disaster! It was the first time I tried partner work. Initially I started out by moving people into pairs. Then I went on to do the review on the board. Even though I had thought through the questions, I had not thought through all the implications of pair work. It was noisy and hard to keep their attention. (Susan, Reflections from Practicum, Sept. 27/95, p. 1)

Despite the fact that it was not a particularly successful lesson, I believe that Susan made a significant gain in her understanding about teaching. Although a certain activity (group work) may appear relatively simple and straightforward, it still requires some planning and thought about how it will be carried out in the classroom.

Barb had had reservations about her students' ability to respond in an appropriate way in the following phys-ed activity:

> I did some warm-ups (the quietest ones get to demonstrate a stretch), then MIRRORS (where children are each other's reflections). I was unsure how that would go over with this class (I thought they might be too hyper), but I was surprised at how into it they were. (Barb, Reflections from Practicum, Sept. 28/95, p. 2)

As a result, Barb was pleasantly surprised with the students' enthusiastic and positive response to the lesson.

Knowledge of Content

A concern expressed by some student teachers was their lack of adequate knowledge and experience with certain subject matter and the implications this had for their planning. In Amy's case, she admitted that her knowledge base of social studies was quite limited. She was plagued with self-doubts about her ability to teach this subject effectively. She also felt pressured by a lack of time to learn the content well enough to be able to plan lessons. As a result, she intended to allot a substantial period of time to expanding her knowledge in this area and on planning lessons to teach:

> Social studies is not a topic I feel completely confident in, mostly because my knowledge is quite low--sadly enough. I know that if I taught a certain

> grade level for a year or two, I would naturally gain confidence and a knowledge base in particular areas. I just feel like I don't know enough and I don't have enough time to learn it all as well as I'd like to. . . . I am concerned for my students--will they learn in spite of me? Can I make the concepts clear enough or will I end up confusing them? I know that I have to devote a big chunk of time to this unit now so that I can feel successful with it. (Amy, Reflections from Practicum, Oct. 13/95, p. 1)

Similarly, Barb admitted that her lack of knowledge about a particular science concept led her to start her planning with acquiring the necessary background knowledge. As she implemented her lessons, she was still plagued with doubt about her ability to understand the concept well enough to teach her students:

> Another thing probably would be that, I don't understand sound all that well myself, so I've been reading a lot about it. But it's still kind of . . . I know it travels through the air, but when it's not completely, totally clear in your mind, it's really hard to explain to kids, I think. (Barb, Interview 7, Nov. 14/95, p. 7)

Lynn also cited her lack of familiarity with certain concepts as having caused her to feel anxious about a science unit she had developed. Another concern that Lynn believed affected her planning was her limited knowledge of resources and materials available in the school:

> I'm worried because I don't really know the concepts that well. I'm worried because I haven't had a chance to talk to her about it, and because it keeps getting delayed. So that creates more anxiety for me and I don't know if the school has all these supplies or if I'm supposed to find other ways to do it, or if it's going to be right at my fingertips or not. I have no idea. It's the not knowing that creates the anxiety. (Lynn, Interview 7, Nov. 2/95, p. 8)

Susan's lack of knowledge and experience with certain subjects forced her to consult the Program of Studies and its curricular objectives continually:

> I think just my own lack of experience and knowledge or whatever about everything, because I find I need to go back to the Program of Studies. I need to try things out and think things out. So there's a lot of things that aren't automatic. They're not there at the forefront. (Susan, Interview 6, Oct. 24/96, p. 7)

Carol's lack of experience teaching a social studies unit resulted in her having to make a decision about which curricular objectives she should emphasize or omit, as she was running out of time in her practicum:

> I guess I realized we've missed a number of social classes due to a variety of things. Anyway, I realized I'm not on track and up to speed in my unit so then I had a hard time trying to decide what to skip and where to jump next to--the result? NOT prepared for today's class. (Carol, Reflections from Practicum, Dec. 1/95)

Fran described the way her lack of familiarity with the topic of a recent health lesson left her unable to know for sure which responses were acceptable or not on the multiple-choice test:

> I didn't get done what I wanted to. I wanted to go into the personal safety kind of things, but I felt like I didn't quite know enough about fire. Some of those answers they're close. You could have more than one, so that's fine . . . . So I just didn't feel like I knew all this stuff to tell them . . . . I haven't taught it before and I don't know. I haven't really taken a fire safety course, either. (Fran, Interview 10, Nov. 27/95, pp. 8-9)

These accounts corroborate Borko and Livingston's (1989) claim that "when student teachers lack adequate content preparation, they spend much of their limited planning time learning the content rather than thinking about how to transform that content into a form comprehensible to students or designing

appropriate teaching strategies and routines" (p. 494). Piland and Anglin (1993) state that these feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about teaching a subject in which student teachers may have limited knowledge and expertise is similar to what experienced teachers experience when they teach a new or unfamiliar topic. This makes me wonder what we as teacher educators and cooperating teachers could do to help student teachers as they plan lessons in unfamiliar content areas. Perhaps if we consider what it is that teachers do to help themselves learn about a new topic as they attempt to teach it to their students, we could offer student teachers some concrete and practical examples that might be of some help during their planning.

In summary, the preceding accounts illustrate the various ways student teachers were inducted into planning in the practicum. We found evidence of cooperating teachers' deliberate and thoughtful attempts to facilitate their student teachers' growth in planning by having them start with planning lessons around classroom routines that would better assure their success. The literature on teacher planning has demonstrated that planning involves the application of various forms of knowledge (pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners, curriculum knowledge) which at the start of the practicum are yet undeveloped in student teachers. As a result, we were able to have a greater appreciation for the difficulties encountered by some student teachers as they attempted to plan with only a limited knowledge of the classroom, students, and instructional strategies. Since student teachers' personal practical knowledge of classrooms is limited to that of former school

experiences and formal preparation training, cooperating teachers may want to consider planning lessons together in order to help them better appreciate the various forms of knowledge that are used in planning. Furthermore, having student teachers begin their planning with classroom routines allows them some time to become more confident in their teaching abilities and feel some sense of security and control over the learning environment.

It was encouraging to learn about the way student teachers began to apply their expanding personal practical knowledge in their planning and classroom practices. The lack of teaching experience and knowledge of students were identified by the student teachers as making their planning that much more challenging. However, as they gained teaching experience, they were able to use this expanding knowledge to assist their planning.

Another theme to emerge from the findings was the influence that student teachers' interactions with students and the knowledge gained from these experiences had on their planning and view of learning. Another concern the student teachers identified was their lack of content knowledge and expertise and the dilemma they faced as they attempted to acquire the necessary background while preparing to teach lessons that would be of a satisfactory quality. These findings were congruent with those of Weinstein's (1989) study that examined prospective elementary and secondary teachers' preconceptions of teaching. Findings revealed that prospective students were particularly concerned with the importance of possessing subject matter knowledge and the ability to provide students with competent explanations. This concern raises the

question of what experienced teachers do when they are planning an unfamiliar topic or subject and how could this knowledge be used to help student teachers. As student teachers gain more experience in planning and teaching, cooperating teachers may want to assume more of a coaching role. Cooperating teachers can better prepare themselves to be supportive and helpful, if they do not expect student teachers to possess skills and knowledge that are beyond their grasp at this stage in their growth (Applegate and Lasley, 1984).

Response To The Cooperating Teachers' Feedback On Their Planning And Teaching

How did the student teachers respond to the cooperating teachers' feedback on their planning and teaching?

All six student teachers varied in their responses to the feedback about their planning and classroom practices provided by their cooperating teachers. One student teacher's response to the cooperating teacher's feedback following the teaching of her first spelling lesson was one of uncertainty and a lack of clarity. Some student teachers' planning appeared to be hindered by a reluctance to use instructional strategies that were different from those used by the cooperating teacher. Other student teachers reported that their cooperating teachers offered encouragement and support that enabled them to feel secure about using instructional approaches that were different from those presently in use. In one particular student teacher's situation, her cooperating teacher avoided offering any critical comments until she had had some time to gain

confidence in her teaching skills. The following accounts present all six student teachers' varied responses to their cooperating teachers' feedback about their planning and teaching.

Criticism Versus Support

The following accounts illustrate two different ways the cooperating teachers' feedback about student teachers' planning and teaching can affect their professional growth. After receiving feedback on her first attempt at teaching a spelling lesson, Lynn claimed to be unsure if her cooperating teacher's comments were based on a preference that she follow a specific teaching style or if it was a matter of applying an acceptable instructional strategy ineffectively. As a result, Lynn was unsure of what aspect of her instruction required revision and therefore, was hindered in making the necessary adjustments in planning for future lessons. This example, I believe, demonstrates the significant value of cooperating teachers having a pre-conference about the lesson planned to avoid potential disappointment or misunderstanding on the student teacher's part which could lead to a strain in their relationship. During this pre-conference, cooperating teachers could then review the lesson under discussion and ask their student teachers to clarify and offer a rationale for the activities planned. This may help student teachers to spend some time reflecting on their instructional choices and what it means in terms of their teaching practices:

> And so when I did my first spelling lesson, which was their unit two, I got lots of feedback from her, but hardly any of it positive. So I knew I had a lot of work to do after that. And I don't know, necessarily, if it's style or if

> it's just she does things differently and thinks I should do it that way. 'Cause sometimes she'll look at my lesson and say, "Well, this is not necessarily bad, but I would do it this way." So I don't know if that's just how she would do it, or if I went to a different teacher, if she would think that it was okay. So, I'm not really sure if it's something that's wrong with the lesson and would not work, or if it's just that the style is wrong for her. (Lynn, Interview 2, Sept. 25/95, p. 5)

The preceding account illustrates the dilemma cooperating teachers face when an instructional choice made by the student teacher is not similar to their own. This example reveals the challenge faced by cooperating teachers when they search for a response to student teachers' attempts at experimenting with different instructional techniques that are not presently in use in the classroom or favored by themselves. It was surprising to learn the way that some cooperating teachers' responses to student teachers' teaching can impact their sense of security and willingness to seek out alternate instructional methods.

In contrast Fran's cooperating teacher, during their discussion following her teaching, began with asking for her opinion of the lesson and followed it with praise. However, if Fran felt the lesson was not successful, her cooperating teacher offered her some strategies to consider for the next lesson:

> Yeah, she writes comments down for me and then she comes up and asks me, "How do you think it went?" And today I thought it went pretty good, the spelling lesson. She says they're starting to respond to me more, which is encouraging. But other times I've said, "No, I don't think it went too well," and she kind of tells me where I could have done better and stuff and I appreciate that. It helps me to know for next time. (Fran, Interview 2, Oct. 2/95, p. 5)

The preceding example reflects Richardson and Boutwell's (1993) research study that examined student teachers' approaches to planning and

implementation of lessons, plans for classroom management, sense of efficacy, and perception of student teaching. Based on analysis of journal reflections, the researchers claimed that student teachers reported feeling more comfortable and secure in their planning abilities as a direct result of the positive feedback received from their cooperating teachers about lessons taught. They also demonstrated a greater depth of thinking about how their formal training related to actual classroom practice.

Perceptions that Hinder Growth

During their planning, some student teachers deliberately avoided selecting activities or instructional strategies that they perceived would not be well received by the cooperating teacher. As a result, these student teachers chose to play it safe and emulate their cooperating teacher's style of teaching. The following examples represent the reluctance demonstrated by two student teachers to introduce a learning activity that might have displeased the cooperating teacher. Lynn reported feeling intimidated by the idea of using group work in her teaching, as she had observed it in limited use by her cooperating teacher. Lynn decided to wait until she had her own classroom to experiment with organizing students into various groupings. It would appear that her desire to receive a favorable evaluation of her teaching hindered her efforts at using instructional strategies contrary to those favored by the cooperating teacher:

> I don't like having them sit in their seats all the time, doing independent work. But my cooperating teacher doesn't use group work very often. I'd like to be able to once in a while use group work in my teaching. I would

> just love to do that, but that's not something that I think Karen [cooperating teacher] would approve of and I figure I'll have my own classroom some day, I can do it then. So I don't know. I'm more concerned right now, I guess about my evaluation, and how she sees things. (Lynn, Interview 5, Oct.19/95, p.10).

Like Lynn, Barb was preoccupied with receiving a favorable performance evaluation and therefore was unwilling to plan lessons that would make her appear lacking in classroom control. However, Barb claimed that once she had her own classroom, she would be more willling to take a risk in her teaching as she no longer would be under the close scrutiny of a cooperating teacher:

> Maybe knowing that I'm being evaluated makes me feel scared to take risks, like to try something like that. I think Okay, I'm going to try them in different centers and things, but I was scared that that was going to be absolute total chaos and one of my evaluators is going to walk in or something. So I'm thinking about that more. If I was in my own classroom, I'd probably take the chance more. (Barb, Interview 6, Oct. 24/95, p. 10)

Susan, on the other hand, viewed having to use her cooperating teachers' materials and resources as limiting the choices available to her in planning and appeared resigned to having to use these in her teaching:

> The difference now is that I'm working with another teacher's ideas and I'm using her materials, so a lot of it's there already. It's basically, what can I do with her stuff? (Susan, Interview 4, Oct. 10/95, p. 2)

Ironically, during her first interview Susan had expressed the desire that her cooperating teacher would volunteer her materials, resources, and instructional ideas:

> Maybe some ideas on practical kinds of resources that aren't too expensive that you can use in class. You can either use from recycled

> products, or whatever, and maybe where some of those resources, or other kinds of resources are available for free or for a reasonable price. . . . And any good ideas for field trips that would fit in. (Susan, Interview 1, Aug. 24/95, p.9)

The preceding findings made me wonder what had caused Susan to view her cooperating teachers' materials as a hindrance to her teaching. Perhaps at this point in her professional growth Susan felt sufficiently confident in her knowledge of the students and teaching ability that she felt the urge to select and use her own resources.

The preceding accounts reflect Goodman's (1985) observation that student teachers often feel reluctant to state their teaching ideas publicly, if these run counter to what is presently used in the classroom and they wish to avoid their cooperating teachers' displeasure.

Of all six student teachers, Fran was the only one to openly admit a desire to model her teaching after that of her cooperating teacher. Fran believed that this was appropriate and would ensure that she was well prepared when she would one day be in charge of her own classroom:

> I'm trying to be actually. I'm trying to do things that she would do. Most of all that I can be doing it properly and the way that she wants me to do it and I guess when I think about it, also to get experience in case I ever do get a teaching job, then I'd know how to work with them and stuff and how to do the reward system and things like that. (Fran, Interview 2, Oct. 2/95, p. 11)

Fran was very different from Susan who wanted to be given the space to develop and use her own materials and resources. Instead, she was eager to emulate her cooperating teacher's instructional strategies.

The preceding accounts highlight the different ways that cooperating teachers went about initiating their student teachers into teaching by considering their strengths and weaknesses, the classroom context, the nature of the students, and the difficulty of the content to be taught. These findings appear to suggest that the role of mentor is not straightforward, as each student teacher enters with prior experiences, expectations, and needs that can be in contrast to those of or perceived by cooperating teachers. The following section discusses some of the student teachers' experiences of being mentored by their cooperating teachers.

Ways to Provide Safety

During our first conversations, all six student teachers reported that they wanted their future cooperating teachers to provide encouragement and the understanding that having difficulties and experiencing some failure were a natural part of the process of learning to teach. For some student teachers, it was important that their cooperating teachers offer them feedback that was positive and supportive to provide them with some self-confidence in their teaching skills and render them more responsive to constructive criticism.

The following examples demonstrate the way two cooperating teachers provided their student teachers with time to make the change from student to teacher and the freedom to choose instructional strategies independent of those presently in use in the classroom.

Carol claimed that due to her cooperating teachers' support and encouragement, she felt comfortable experimenting with various instructional

strategies and activities in her planning and teaching:

> But I feel like I feel more confident that I have some strategies to handle a classroom. And I think I've gained some, even in the two and a half weeks that I've been in this classroom, just by example of the other teachers. And then them giving me lots of space to sort of try different things. (Carol, Interview 9, Nov. 13/95, p. 2)

Like Carol, Amy described how at the start of the practicum she was given the opportunity to experiment with alternative methods of instruction and build up her self-confidence as a teacher without the fear of a negative response from the cooperating teacher:

> She let me go almost, you know, for the first half. Some people might not like this, without too much criticism, constructive or not. She would list the positive points, and if there was something like any misinformation that I told her, or something that she had a suggestion for, then she would tell that to you, but no, she just let me go for it. (Amy, Interview 8, Nov. 3/95, p. 6)

From these accounts, I have learned different ways that student teachers responded to their cooperating teachers' feedback about planning and instruction and how this influenced their growth as teachers. For example, one student teacher shared her feelings of uncertainty as to how to interpret her cooperating teacher's feedback on her teaching. As well, I found that in certain situations student teachers ignored their own personal preferences in order to avoid the possibility of displeasing their cooperating teachers. It was encouraging to encounter examples of cooperating teachers creating the space for student teachers to make the transition from student to teacher and to develop a teaching approach that was compatible with their needs as learners.

Enz and Cook's (1992) study explored student and cooperating teachers' perceptions about the role and function of cooperating teachers. According to these researchers, cooperating teachers need to assume the following characteristics of an effective mentor:

> They should be caring, active listeners, sensitive to the views of others; they need to understand the comprehensiveness of the mentoring role and to offer candid, regular feedback in a supportive manner. Shared understandings of purpose between students and cooperating teachers can serve as a vehicle for facilitating dialogue between the cooperating and student teacher and may result in an awareness of the perceived role of the cooperating teacher by both parties. (p. 1)

Contrary to what the preceding researchers advocate that mentors do, the findings in my study reveal that some student teachers appreciate their cooperating teachers' offer of positive and encouraging feedback, particularly at the start of the practicum, as opposed to being given frank criticism. This gave the student teachers both the time and the space to build their self-confidence. For example, Amy claimed to have appreciated the way her cooperating teacher offered only positive feedback initially, thereby enabling her to have the time and space to build her self-confidence in her teaching skills.

Recalling Barb's hope that her future cooperating teacher would be supportive and positive in her feedback serves as an important reminder of the vulnerability and uncertainty that some student teachers experience as they prepare to begin the practicum. They want to feel welcomed and encouraged by their cooperating teachers:

> Mostly just I guess advice, like being able to help out, how to approach things, what things I have to think about. And to be supportive, like not

> overly critical, but be able to help me out, but also be positive like support me, but also like, if I ask her questions I hope she's willing to help me out with any difficult things I face. (Pause) I hope she's enthusiastic about helping me, too. (Barb, Interview 1, Sept. 8/95, p. 7)

Summary

All six student teachers had different planning experiences due to the variety of classroom contexts. A key difference among their experiences was whether their beginning work with planning and teaching was gradual or abrupt. Four student teachers had gradual introductions to planning and this enabled them to experience success early in the practicum and supported their confidence as teachers. The two student teachers that had abrupt introductions to planning found this process challenging, as their knowledge of the students and classroom was limited and they did not experience successful lessons.

The student teachers started the practicum with their own personal practical knowledge of classrooms based on earlier experiences. Initially, their planning reflected their limited knowledge of students and teaching and tended to be content focused and content heavy. As they gained teaching experience, the student teachers' personal practical knowledge grew. This was evident in their planning as it reflected their expanding knowedge of classroom routines, students, and instructional strategies. Their planning became more like that of experienced teachers.

Another factor that appeared to influence student teachers' planning in the practicum was their limited subject matter knowledge. The student teachers found themselves faced with the dilemma of having to become familiar with the

topic while trying to plan lessons. This made some student teachers feel uncertain about the type of activities to select as they had no prior experience or knowledge. This finding raised an important question as to what could be done to help student teachers with the dilemma.

Student teachers' planning was also influenced by their cooperating teachers' feedback. At the onset of the practicum the student teachers had expressed the hope that their cooperating teachers would offer them support and encouragement. At the beginning of the practicum, those student teachers given only positive feedback or only a limited amount of constructive criticism appeared to appreciate this time as a safe place to experiment and make mistakes. The student teachers also expressed the importance of being given clear and specific feedback, as it provided them with specific and concrete information to guide their planning choices. Feeling supported and encouraged to try instructional strategies different from those presently used in the classroom also appeared to support student teachers' growth.

Chapter 6

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

This chapter examines the student teachers' experiences of assessing students' learning in the practicum classroom and their growing awareness of the relationship of assessment to planning. Stiggens (1988) describes the multiple purposes of assessment as "diagnosing individual and group needs; selection, placement, and grouping for instructional purposes; controling and motivating students; communciating achievement and other expectations; evaluating instructional procedures; and providing test-taking experiences" (p. 367). Since teachers use information gathered from various assessment methods to select learning activities for future lessons, I decided that it would be valuable to examine the way in which the student teachers used their expanding knowledge of students' learning, gained from different assessment activities, to provide direction for their planning.

During the first pre-practicum interviews, three of the six student teachers spontaneously expressed an interest in wanting to learn more about the topic of student assessment. Specifically they expressed interest in or concern about the use of various forms of assessment, measuring what students had learned, identifying what to assess, and selecting the most opportune times to conduct assessment. Throughout the practicum, I found that all six student teachers spontaneously described their experiences with conducting student assessments. In this chapter I will present accounts of the student teachers' initial attempts at carrying out assessments of students' learning, their

experiences with different methods of assessment, their search for coherence and meaning in the processes involved, their use of the information gained from these activities to guide the planning of future lessons, their grappling with the ethical and moral dilemma of being the evaluator, and their growth in the skills of checking for students' understanding. The following section examines three student teachers' pre-practicum thoughts about assessment.

Pre-Practicum Ideas About Student Assessment

During the pre-practicum interviews, only three student teachers spontaneously spoke about the topic of student assessment. The following interview excerpts convey what they were anticipating doing or learning where student assessment was concerned.

Amy was aware of the various forms assessment could take. She was able to provide several examples of ways to assess students' learning at the end of a lesson:

> At the very end, to wrap it up, I might have something like an evaluation such as a worksheet, or a little test, or question period, or something. Or it could just be a class discussion . . . (Amy, Interview 1, Aug. 28/95, p. 5)

Despite wanting to use different forms of assessment in her planning, Amy mentioned her difficulty in doing so during a cohort planning assignment:

> Planning for evaluation. Just try to get different kinds of evaluation into your lesson plans and different units and things. I found that was hard to do. (Amy, Interview 1, Aug. 28/95, p. 8)

Susan, on the other hand, discussed assessment in terms of its usefulness in providing teachers with a concrete means of measuring what

students had learned and to set standards for performance expectations:

> To be able to get an idea of what really you should expect from children as far as their learning and what they produce as a result of how far you can really expect them to go, or how much you can expect them to do in a day, that kind of thing. . . . Sort of an instrument or something to use for measuring afterwards to see if they really have learned that which you've been aiming at teaching them. . . . As for measuring, you know, during assessment being able to see that the children really did learn that. (Susan, Interview 1, Aug. 24/95, p. 6)

For Lynn, learning how to conduct assessments of students' growth was an important pre-practicum teaching goal. Lynn wanted to learn what was worthwhile assessing and the most appropriate times to carry out student assessments:

> I expect to know assessment. How do you know what to assess? When do you assess? To me assessment is really important. I've always valued it a lot, personally, and I want to know what to assess. I know you don't assess every single thing they do, but I want to know how you know what to assess, I guess. (Lynn, Interview 1, Aug. 23/95, p. 10)

The pre-practicum ideas expressed by these three student teachers about student assessment show similarity to those reported by Herbert and McNergney (1988) in their study which investigated first year teachers' planning for evaluation purposes, their implementation of student evaluations, and their identification of how planning and evaluation were connected. Four planning behaviours were described as being typical of first year teachers' approach to evaluating students' learning: "achievement of objectives or goals, learner involvement or interest, use of homework or other individual assignment, and participation in group discussions" (p. 39).

The preceding accounts reveal the pre-practicum ideas that three student teachers had about student assessments. Despite their having participated in similar cohort planning and teaching activities, their ideas about assessment varied considerably and reflected what was important to them at that particular moment. Student assessments provide teachers with valuable information about students' learning and serve as a guide for planning future lessons. Following the initial practicum interviews, I decided that it was important to investigate, at various points during the practicum, all six student teachers' experiences with assessment and their understanding of its role in planning for instruction.

Early and Mid-Practicum Experiences with Assessment

How did the experience of conducting student assessments affect student teachers' growth as teachers?

The following examples illustrate the various experiences that the student teachers reported having while conducting student assessments. The problem of finding the time and opportunity to carry out student assessments, the moral dilemma of having to assign a grade, and the preoccupation with classroom organization and maintaining control were identified by some of the student teachers as having an impact on their ability to evaluate students' learning.

Problem of Time and Opportunity

Three student teachers reported lack of time as a major hindrance in their ability to carry out student assessments. In the following interview excerpt, Amy

discussed her struggle with finding the time and opportuntity to assess students' learning during her teaching. As a way to cope with the limited amount of class time available, Amy collected several pieces of work from each student and planned to evaluate them at a later time. The idea of having something concrete by which to assess students' learning provided her with a sense of comfort and reassurance that her students were learning:

> I've been trying to take as much from them as I can, get them to actually do things that I'll be able to look back and see. . . . I haven't been daily looking at or making notes at the end of every language arts lesson, or anything like that about questioning. I just haven't had the time or taken the time to do that, so I want things that I can look at the date, see what they've done and go from there. (Amy, Interview 8, Nov. 3/95, pp. 3-4)

Susan was primarily consumed with the organizational aspects of the lesson, and that left her with little time to check for students' understanding:

> I was so busy handing out the materials that I didn't have time to really watch what they were doing--or be encouraging their discovery by asking questions as they were rubbing the petals on the paper. (Susan, Reflections from Practicum, Sept. 26/95, p. 1)

The issue of finding the time to assess students' learning continued to concern Susan, particularly in the subject area of physical education. She admitted to being more preoccupied with ensuring that the students were playing safely and with maintaining classroom control than with whether they had grasped the skill being taught:

> Phys-ed is one thing that I find really hard, because all I'm concentrating on is trying to keep them on task and managing them and I don't have much space or time or eyes left to see who's actually doing it well and who's not. (Susan, Interview 5, Oct. 17/95, p. 2)

Like Susan, Barb was preoccupied with classroom management and found herself with little time to notice if the students had grasped the concept of the lesson:

> The only thing I didn't really get to see was if they were trying the counting-on strategy for when they were adding the third one, when they were doing it with the dice because it was, as you noticed, crazy in there. I was busy, you know, and I never really had a chance to notice that they were actually using that strategy. A few of them came up to me and told me that that's what they were doing, so I know some of them were, but I don't know if they all were. (Barb, Interview 4, Oct. 10/95, p. 7)

These accounts illustrate the challenge that some student teachers face as they attempt to balance carrying out student assessments with their other teaching responsibilities. A teacher's ability to attend to a multitude of teaching activities while simultaneously keeping mental track of students' performance requires a great deal of practice and experience, and student teachers have yet to acquire this at this stage in their professional training. Lidstone and Hollingsworth (1992) argue that:

> Attention to students' learning from academic tasks also requires a teacher to integrate management, subject knowledge, and student learning. . . . This integration usually develops after the beginning teacher has routinized management and subject/pedagogy knowledge separately, although some teachers never integrate the two (p. 43).

Moral and Ethical Dilemmas of Assessment

Having to assume the role of evaluator for the first time was both a new and unexpected experience for the student teachers. They appeared to struggle in their search for coherence and integrity within the evaluation process. They also became aware of the way in which their judgment of

students' work could affect their students' self-confidence, and they found this experience to be unsettling.

Fran reported re-examining the objectives of the art lesson during her assessment of students' work and commented that at times she felt forced to make a subjective decision. She was grateful to have had this experience, but continued to search for some coherence in the evaluation process:

> Well, I had to look back at my evaluation for each lesson of what I would be looking for. It was difficult sometimes because some of them were just on the edge and I had to go back sometimes and compare it to another, and then I'd change the marking either up one or down one. So, it was a good experience. It was just rather difficult. I still don't know if I marked it properly, but, you know, I have to be able to tell the kids something. (Fran, Interview 7, Nov. 9/95, p. 9)

Susan was uncomfortable with having to evaluate students' competence in certain tasks, since sensible criteria were not always obvious:

> I guess one of the things that has come up more is assessment as we're doing all these things. I'm wondering, well it's fun and they are learning, but when it comes to actually recording something or giving them a mark, especially in science, how do I do that? How can I judge if somebody gets an A or a B on making suns? (Susan, Interview 3, Oct. 3/95, p. 2)

The preceding account demonstrates that the dilemma faced by this student teacher was not one of subjectivity; rather it had to do with selecting relevant criteria by which to assess students' learning and understanding. Furthermore, it emphasizes the important role that assessment plays in planning and that the criteria used in selecting activities that are authentic representations of what students have learned need to be relevant.

In her pre-practicum interview, Amy expressed an awareness of the various forms of assessment used to collect information about students' learning. She attempted to incorporate this during her planning of a language arts unit by collecting several samples of her students' work. Despite having collected a number of items, she was unsure whether she had enough material to evaluate her students' learning:

> I do not have any clear-cut ideas of how I would do it. It's something that I know that I have to start putting in there. I think language arts is also one of the hardest subjects to evaluate. My first thought when I was planning the unit was I'll get a lot of stuff: a lot of their writing, a lot of different kinds of mapping or things like that too. And then I'll have some stuff on them and I can be able to do it. I don't know, now that I have it, that I'm getting that stuff, it's wonderful things and good writing and things like that, but I need more, I think. (Amy, Interview 6, Oct. 20/95, pp. 3-4)

Barb, like Susan and Amy, expressed feeling uncomfortable with her methods of assessment. Moreover, she felt guilty for having to rely on pencil and paper tasks to assess students' learning. She cited the large class size and the need to have control over the class as the major reasons for using this particular form of assessment:

> The tough thing is that I was thinking about this lately actually because I think with a class of twenty-seven students I feel guilty only marking purely on product. Process should be taken into account somewhere, but it's really tough when you have all these kids running around. It's really hard to say, "OK, are they learning?" It's really hard to do that. So mostly it's ended up being the products that are getting marked. But I'm trying to consider the student and that kind of stuff when I'm marking them. . . . It's tough because you're purely marking on what they handed in to you. It's really hard to do a lot more because you're so busy during the day. (Barb, Interview 5, Oct. 17/95, p. 2)

Less than a month into the practicum, Barb attempted to find a balance in deciding the mark to assign to a student's work as she struggled with the feelings of guilt over having to give a poor grade. Moreover, she was concerned with the impact that her evaluation would have on a student's self-esteem:

> I'm marking some language arts' writing tasks I had the children do yesterday, and I also find this a bit challenging. I don't want to be overly generous or too tough of a marker--and I also feel terrible when I give a child a poor mark (especially the ones who try very hard). I want them to all feel good about themselves. (Barb, Reflections from Practicum, Oct.11/95, pp. 2-3)

Lynn admitted to having had to reconsider her prior belief that she would not have any difficulty assigning a low grade to a student, as she now had a personal interest in the well-being of her students:

> I learned a lot and changed some of my previous ideas. I did not think it would be difficult to give a low grade if a student deserved it, but after doing some marking, I can see how other things like student self-esteem can affect the mark you give. (Lynn, Reflections from Practicum, Oct. 24/95, p. 2)

These accounts concur with Floden and Clark's (1988) findings that:

> the uncertainty in testing and grading can surprise and trouble beginning teachers . . . . When these beginners give tests or read essays, they see that the common means of assessing student understanding provide no easy path to certainty. The importance, impersonality, and finality of grading make beginners feel especially uncomfortable about this source of uncertainty. (p. 509)

The experiences of these student teachers can be likened to what some experienced teachers face in the classroom. Within the school system there is pressure to produce concrete evidence of students' learning. Teachers may

find themselves pushed for time and dealing with a multitude of other constraints (large class sizes, scheduling). This may lead to their implementing assessment methods (paper and pen tests) that don't appear to represent holistically what students know and can do. Similarly, these student teachers found themselves at times having to implement assessment methods that were chosen more on the basis of expedience than what was in the best interests of the students. As the student teachers got to know their students better and developed a rapport with them, they began to search for more pedagogically responsible ways by which to assess their learning. They were also concerned with the influence that certain assessment practices could have on both students' self-confidence and their relationship with them.

Too Busy to Focus on Students' Learning

At the start of the practicum, two student teachers reported being more preoccupied with classroom management and survival than with students' learning. This was reminiscent of what other researchers (Fuller & Bown, 1975; Iannaccone, 1963; Kagan, 1992) had reported.

Carol admitted to being more concerned with getting through the lesson than with what the students had learned:

> Well, I was thinking about that yesterday, that the more I plan my objectives, at least for these first couple of weeks, or trying to get through material and trying to plow ahead that way, and in some ways I was hardly even thinking what are they learning by the end of the class. So I mean, reality right now is that. (Carol, Interview 4, Oct. 12/95, p. 3)

Fran claimed to have carried out some assessments of students' learning; however, she admitted to being more concerned about classroom management:

> I mean I've done a bit of it [student assessment] but not very much. And I think it's more I haven't really had my mind on the evaluation as much, like on evaluating them necessarily but more in fact on what am I thinking of here on classroom management. That's what I've mostly been focusing on. So I need to try and get a balance between those two. I still do take in their art work and I mark it and stuff so I'm getting some evaluation. (Fran, Interview 5, Oct. 23/95, p. 3)

Herbert and McNergney (1988) state that the classroom setting places numerous demands on teachers' time and energy and that it can lead to teachers selecting methods of assessment that are not necessarily useful or indicative of what students have learned. These interview excerpts highlight student teachers' first encounters with that challenge.

Later Practicum Growth with Student Assessment

As the student teachers gained experience teaching and their knowledge of the students increased, they began to take greater responsibility for the integrity of their assessment approaches. In addition, the student teachers' growth as teachers was demonstrated in the way they began to use the information gained from various assessment activities to make decisions for planning of future lessons.

Search for Coherence

In this section, accounts are presented that depict the various ways that these student teachers sought to find coherence in their approach to assessing students' learning. For two student teachers, thinking about the criteria that they

would use to assess students' work was an important part of their planning. In the case of two other student teachers, they learned to listen carefully to their pupils' responses to help them assess the extent of their understanding. The following examples reflect two student teachers' understanding about the importance of establishing criteria during the planning process for assessing students' work.

Carol recognized the need to first establish criteria for assessing students' work to provide herself with a purpose and a direction to follow:

> Well, actually it was a good process, because I had to figure out exactly what the criteria were, or what criteria I was using to mark them. Then once I did that it was a lot easier to mark them because I knew what criteria I was basing it on, so it went a lot faster after I had the criteria made up. (Carol, Interview 8, Nov. 6/95, p. 5)

Like Carol, Amy, while planning an upcoming novel study unit, deliberated over the marking system she would use to evaluate students' work and how she would eventually arrive at a final grade:

> I have to start setting up and deciding, because I haven't yet, for my novel study. How am I going to come up with an end mark for that? I'll have all this stuff, what's going to weigh, for how much, there's an end project. What are those going to be? How will those be evaluated? 'Cause they're all different projects, so, do you mark them on the same scale, or how? (Amy, Interview 8, Nov. 3 /95, pp. 12-13)

Using Assessment to Inform Planning

The following examples demonstrate the ways in which three student teachers became quite skillful at listening carefully to pupils' responses to enable them to ascertain whether or not the students had grasped the concepts being taught.

By deliberately posing more questions, Susan discovered that her students had not grasped the larger concept. She in turn used this knowledge to make the decision that another lesson would be needed to review the concept being presented:

> I had answers ranging from brown, purple, stay the same, green and pink. At the end they all could see that only one of those answers was correct. However, when I took it one step further and asked them what would happen if I added white to green, the answers were similar to that of the previous question. This shows me that they did not grasp the larger concept that white added to anything makes it lighter. So we need a bit of a follow-up lesson on that. (Susan, Reflections from Practicum, Oct. 3/95, p. 1)

Barb learned to use both the deliberate posing of questions to students and their written responses to determine the extent of their learning:

> Whether or not they're learning is mostly kind of a feedback thing, I think, going on in the classroom. I like asking a lot of questions and trying to see whether they got it or not and then I look at all the sheets they did when they hand them in. I kind of check them out to see if they're getting anything out of this. (Barb, Interview 8, Nov. 21/95, pp. 5-6)

By the end of the practicum, Amy no longer relied solely on collecting concrete evidence of students' learning. Instead she began to use more in-depth questioning as a useful strategy to check students' understanding. As well, she spent time closely observing and listening to her students' discussions during group work to further inform her about their understanding and progress:

> What I usually use is questioning, and listening for their answers, and trying to build on that, or having someone else build on that. Or, if they just say part, get someone to tell the other part. . . . I'll be able to tell (pause) . . . . at the end of the lesson to just be able to say, "Okay, did they get that? Do we have to do that over?" The way they talk to each other. You can hear some of their conversations. (Amy, Interview 11, Dec. 1/95,

p. 6)

The purpose of student assessment is not only to determine students' achievement of curricular objectives, but to help teachers consider ways to modify their instruction to meet any gaps in learning. Barnes (1983) insists that in order for student teachers to make appropriate planning decisions for future lessons, they need to become skilled at evaluating students' learning problems in order to plan and implement remedial strategies competently. Tomlinson, Tomchin, and Callahan (1994) conducted a three-phase study that encompassed the use of surveys, classroom observations, and interviews with approximately seventy student teachers and their cooperating teachers. The study examined both student teachers' and their cooperating teachers' attitudes and instructional practices towards a diverse group of students, including the gifted. The findings demonstrate that the presence of certain factors (concern with survival, views of teaching and learning, inadequate assessment practices, lack of role models) led to student teachers' limited attempts to differentiate their instructional approaches to accommodate the diverse learning needs of their students. They also noted that their choices of assessment practices were inadequate. These researchers claimed that student teachers, when assessing students, lacked understanding of the critical role that assessment methods play in informing teachers about what students know or understand. They argued that when student teachers do not possess a "clear picture of what a student knows or understands," selecting and implementing appropriate remedial

activities is difficult (p. 22). Findings from my study, however, demonstrate that despite the struggles that the student teachers faced when they attempted to carry out assessments of students' learning, they recognized that it had an important role to play in influencing their future teaching activities. Furthermore, these student teachers became more able to use the information gained from various assessment activities to plan lessons to remediate the gaps in students' learning. As well, the length of the practicum (three months) provided the student teachers with the opportunity and time to focus on the assessment of students' learning.

Summary

From these findings I have learned that the student teachers did think about assessing students' learning prior to and early on in the practicum. However, once in the practicum classroom they found that it was difficult to conduct assessment when their attention was being taken up with concerns about classroom organization, students' pace, and management. Despite being preoccupied with other tasks and schedules characteristic of classroom life, the student teachers still insisted that student assessment had an important role to play in planning and instruction and remained hopeful that they would find a way to focus their attention and efforts on this aspect of teaching. While their early attempts with assessment met with difficulty, these experiences heightened their awareness of the need for coherence and integrity within assessment processes. They began to search for clear and sensible criteria for marking and they questioned the completeness and appropriateness of the

assessment information they had collected.

The student teachers also came to recognize that their assessment practices would influence both their instructional strategies and their relationships with their students. Once they had formed relationships with their students, they began to appreciate the impact that the marks they assigned to students' work would have on their self-confidence. They felt a moral responsibility to ensure that their actions were in the best interests of their students. Consequently, they found themselves experiencing guilt when pressured by constraints of time and class size to use assessment methods that were chosen on the basis of expedience.

Towards the end of the practicum, the student teachers became more proficient in carrying out student assessments while simultaneously maintaining classroom organization. As experienced teachers do while planning, they began to use their knowledge of students' learning to plan future lessons.

The above accounts clarify how these student teachers dealt with and understood the role that student assessment plays in planning and classroom instruction. The examples presented highlight not only the student teachers' struggles with finding ways to carry out assessment in a competent manner, but more importantly, doing it in a pedagogically responsible manner. As they gained teaching experience and established a relationship with their students, they became concerned with the potential effect that their assessment practices would have on their students. Consequently, they sought assessment activities that were both meaningful and authentic. Because of factors such as deadlines,

schedules, and class size, the student teachers adopted assessment practices that were sometimes more expedient than adequate. These experiences raised feelings of discomfort, uncertainty, and guilt. It is clear from these accounts that the student teachers struggled in their efforts with student assessment. They expressed disappointment and frustration with many of their assessment practices. It also would appear, however, that it was through wrestling with the practical and ethical dilemmas of conducting adequate assessment that they developed a keener sense of the need for coherence, integrity, and pedagogical responsibility in the assessment process.

Chapter 7

LEARNING FROM THE UNEXPECTED

As part of the data collection process during my weekly visits to the schools, I spent time reading all six student teachers' journal reflections. This gave me another opportunity to examine their on-going ideas about planning and instruction and another window into their recent teaching experiences. I was surprised to find all six student teachers reporting on their experiences with unexpected events in the practicum classroom. During our earlier conversations, I had not raised this issue. I decided to re-examine the data collected from the previous cohort year (cohort interviews, reflection assignments, classroom observations) in hope of discovering if this particular phenomenon had been experienced previously by any of the student teachers. I found reference to this particular topic only once during a cohort interview with one student teacher. As the topic appeared to have become salient to all of them, I felt it was important enough to pursue during subsequent interviews. I hoped to learn more about how these student teachers experienced interruptions in the practicum classroom and how these affected their thinking about planning and instruction.

Britzman (1986) states that "while spontaneity and the unexpected should be significant features of a student teacher's own learning experiences, the classroom requirement to present a stable appearance tends to make student teachers view the unexpected as a 'bind' rather than as an opportunity for learning" (p. 449). I wondered whether the student teachers in my study

viewed unexpected events as barriers to their teaching or whether they understood them as opportunities to learn to become flexible and adaptable to the ever-present changing demands of the classroom environment.

The accounts I present and discuss in this chapter reveal the variety of ways these student teachers encountered, experienced, or thought about unexpected events in their classrooms. These stories help one appreciate that experiences of the unexpected are a particularly important dimension of the learning and growth that take place during a practicum.

Being Ready for the Unexpected

How do unexpected occurrences impact student teachers' planning and teaching?

Re-examining the data collected from the previous year, I found that Lynn was the only one of the six student teachers who had discussed her experience with an unexpected event and the way it led to the revision of her earlier views of planning. According to Lynn, it was an earlier cohort field experience in which she had co-planned and implemented a science lesson that made her realize the importance of planning additional learning activities. The following cohort interview excerpt highlights Lynn's surprise at finding that the students had recently been taught the topic planned for that day. As a result, she and her group found themselves having to make sudden changes to their original plan.

Lynn reported feeling relieved that they had thought to include some additional learning activities during their planning of the lesson:

> We found out what can happen when a lesson flops . . . . The Friday before we got there, the teacher went in and explained everything to them. When we got there, they knew it all. We had a bit of a back-up plan. We had brought along an extra game just in case our lesson went too fast, which was a good thing that we had planned for that. Even then by the end of an hour and a half it was too long for them because they already knew the stuff and they got bored by the end I think. But it was good even though our lesson didn't turn out how we wanted it to. We really learned from that. (Lynn, Interview 1, Cohort Research, Nov. 3/94, pp. 13-14)

After completing two months of her practicum, Lynn's expanding knowledge of children and classroom life was evident in her emphasis on flexibility in planning. During the planning of a lesson, Lynn appeared to consider the long-term view of where a lesson was headed to enable her to make the necessary adjustments when unexpected constraints developed during the implementation of the lesson. Lynn already had experienced the effect of having to deal with interruptions during her teaching. She learned to make quick decisions as to which activities could be postponed until a later date. She also recognized the influence that students had on her planning and on what takes place in the classroom:

> I am noticing that there is just never enough time in the day to get everything done that a teacher wants or needs to get done. Flexibility, I am learning, is one of the more important skills a teacher needs to develop. There always seems to be something going on that throws your schedule off and you need to work around that . . . . In being flexible, I am also learning how to prioritize what has to be done this week, and what can be pushed back a week. Besides school events, there are also things that students take longer to do than was planned and so extra time has to be allotted when this kind of thing arises. A teacher really has to stay on top of things, because although sometimes these things are known about in advance and can be planned for, other times things will happen on the spur of the moment and you need to be ready to do a

> quick change in the classroom schedule. (Lynn, Reflections from Practicum, Nov.13/95, pp.1-2)

The preceding account echoes the findings that Cockburn (1994) reported in a study of experienced teachers' identification of the various stresses involved in teaching. The themes of time and interruptions were identified as particularly stressful. "Time, or lack of it, is a commodity which dominates the consciousness of many teachers. . . . High quality teaching and learning time are scarce resources which are threatened by a variety of demands and interruptions in the classroom setting" (p. 378). Learning to take the rhythms of school events and students' work rates into account in planning is clearly a significant accomplishment for student teachers.

While Lynn emphasized flexibility and always knowing the long-term plan as a response to the unpredictability of classroom life, another student teacher, Barb, focused on the importance of being as prepared as possible to minimize unexpected problems. Less than a month into the practicum, Barb told how a recent teaching experience helped her to better appreciate the value of ensuring that materials and activities are prepared and organized in advance to avoid last-minute running around. Barb described her planning process as encompassing the consideration of a multitude of teaching details (passing out materials, transition times) and an approximation of the amount of time necessary to accomplish these tasks:

> Try to be as organized as possible, which I still have to do. Use your time wisely. Always think about your objective. Make sure you think about every little thing ahead of time, like transitions and materials and little

> things like that that you can just realize, "Oh, my goodness, how did I forget that?" Always be really prepared for something being different than what you thought it would be, like having extra time, and be really prepared ahead of time for everything. You don't want to be doing things at the last minute like I was doing today at lunch, getting things ready at the last minute because this weekend I was sick and I didn't really have time. (Barb, Interview 4, Oct.10/95, p. 8)

It would appear that an important part of Barb's planning process was to mentally review the structure of her lesson as a way to check that she had not overlooked anything prior to the teaching of the lesson. This finding was similar to that described by Sardo-Brown's (1990) study which examined the planning processes of experienced teachers. The researcher found evidence that experienced teachers mentally rehearse their plans as a way to anticipate potential problems or to elaborate upon an activity. I believe that Barb's account reflected her growth as a teacher in that she appeared to use her experiences with unexpected events to revise her approach to planning to being even more solidly prepared in anticipation of the unexpected.

During my weekly classroom observations with each of the six student teachers, I sometimes had occasion to witness the student teachers thinking on their feet in response to an interruption or unexpected event. The following incident is an example of where I felt that the student teacher had handled an unexpected interruption in a commendable and efficient manner. The student teacher found a way to use this unanticipated event to support the objective of the lesson. Just as Susan was preparing to start her health lesson on behaving responsibly, a parent of one of the students in her classroom arrived unannounced and asked to be allowed to bring in her show dog for an

impromptu show and tell. Susan responded to this interruption in a pleasant and calm manner and afterwards used the incident to serve as an example of the need to behave in a responsible manner when caring for a pet:

> Well, because I was going to meet them in cozy corner, to do the whole discussion, but then I didn't realize the mom was bringing her dog in, or the child's dog. So, I just thought I might as well just carry on because by the time I take them over there and take them back, the class would be gone . . . . So I didn't really do it in the same way I'd thought I was going to. (Susan, Interview 4, Oct. 10/95, pp. 4-5)

The following excerpt is from my classroom observation notes of that particular incident with the show dog:

> After the mother leaves with the dog, Susan tells the students that owning a pet requires a lot of time and energy and that it is a responsibility that should be taken seriously to ensure that the animal is well looked after and it is an example of what they would be discussing in today's lesson. (Classroom Observation Notes, Oct. 10/95, p. 1)

Britzman (1986) has argued that in practicum student teachers should be encouraged to view unexpected events as opportunities for growth and experimentation. According to Britzman, when a student teacher is preoccupied with appearing in control, it "devalues her/his power to explore and be open to unknown teaching territory and consequently in classroom situations the student in each student teacher often becomes repressed and denied" (p. 449). In this example, Susan demonstrated the kind of openness Britzman is writing about.

Yon (1992) conducted a study that compared student teachers' and prospective teachers' schemata for teaching and learning. Findings from the study indicated that the student teachers' teaching experience resulted in their

having "schemata that contain information which allows for and encourages alternative solutions in the complex learning environment" (p. 126). Therefore, as student teachers gain experience in teaching and knowledge about classroom events and students, it is applied during interactive teaching. They become increasingly adept at formulating a number of strategies to solve problems as they arise.

The above accounts reveal the student teachers' increasing acceptance of and ability to work with the unexpected. They articulated their awareness that teaching requires flexibility, preparedness, openness, or an overall view of where one is going in order to work well with those happenings or rhythms in the classroom which are not or cannot be planned.

Understanding the Value of Routines

While Lynn's response to uncertainty was to value flexibility, and Barb's response was to take greater responsibility for preparedness, and Susan demonstrated openness, Amy's experience of unexpected events helped her to appreciate the role and value of classroom routines. Floden and Clark (1988) assert that routines are tools that teachers use to enhance certainty in an otherwise complex learning environment. Routines play an important role in classroom management as they increase "teachers' certainty that students will do what the teacher expects" (p. 517). As the practicum took place at the start of the school year when classroom routines and procedures were being introduced and reinforced, a month into the practicum Amy wrote in her reflection journal about having come to appreciate the critical role that routines

play in providing both teachers and students a sense of control and predictability in the classroom setting. The following journal reflection excerpt highlights the impact that a surprise visit by the school nurse had on both Amy and her students:

> The students were a little wild today . . . . The morning routine and daily schedule wasn't followed because a nurse came in to talk to them in the morning . . . . This tells me (shows me) how important routines are in the classroom. In a way it gives the students some control--they know what to expect and can prepare themselves for it. So I now have another reason why I will set up routines and schedules for my future classroom. Not just for my own classroom management reasons, but for the students as well. (Amy, Reflections from Practicum, Oct. 5/95, p. 1)

Amy's identification of the critical role and function that classroom routines play in teaching and students' learning is reminiscent of Leinhardt, Weidman, and Hammond's (1987) study of six experienced mathematics teachers attempting to organize the instructional structure of their classrooms at the start of the school year and the way that these were maintained throughout the year. They state that "successful teachers use the first days of school to establish and rehearse routines which permit instruction to proceed fluidly and efficiently" (p. 135).

It would seem that Amy's view that an integral part of planning involves the establishment of classroom routines was in contrast, however, to that of Brown and Wendel's (1993) findings in their study of first year secondary teachers' beliefs about lesson planning. The researchers claimed that at the start of the year beginning teachers were more concerned with planning content than with the development and implementation of classroom rules and

procedures. Perhaps Amy's awareness of the role that routines play in learning in the classroom can be attributed partly to her being present in the classroom at the start of the school year as routines were being introduced and modeled by the cooperating teacher. As well, Amy's placement in an elementary classroom setting entailed her being responsible for the planning and implementation of several subjects and transitions and for helping to shape the rhythm of the whole day for her students.

Improvisational Teaching

Fran, a student teacher who was predisposed to an improvisational style of teaching to begin with, responded to experiences of the unexpected by planning even less in the way of detail. Unexpected events had not even been a topic for her until it was brought to her attention by other student teachers.

A month into the practicum, Fran approached lesson planning and teaching with the attitude that she would improvise when the situation warranted it:

> I haven't really thought about this much, but I heard someone else mention it--that we need to try to be focused on what might happen, the unexpected kind of thing, which I haven't done a lot of basically with my lessons. Well, with my lessons I plan it as it's supposed to be and then if I have to improvise, well, that's fine. I'll give you an example. With their journals a couple of weeks ago, they needed more time and so Mary [cooperating teacher] said give them five more minutes and that seemed to help them get more focused . . . . So just to kind of read them and try to find out what they need and how they're doing with it [the lesson]. If it [the lesson] needs to be more exciting, well then maybe I can pull something out of my head. (Fran, Interview 4, Oct. 16/95, p. 2)

Later on during another interview, Fran described how she had begun to plan lessons in less detail as she did not wish to feel compelled to follow a rigid plan. Rather than be concerned with trying to recall and implement the specific details of her lesson plan, Fran preferred a more flexible approach that allowed her to focus more on the students than the content with the freedom to make changes only if the situation required it:

> I figure I'm just kind of being brief. I'm not going into a lot of detail because I don't know if it's because I'm lazy or what, but I figure that I'm just going to go through it. This is just basically what I'm going to do and then whatever happens I can kind of work it in. And I go into more detail with the kids obviously than I do in the lesson. And I like it that way because I can just be more at ease with the kids and stuff. I don't have to spend so much time writing out the lesson plans. (Fran, Interview 6, Oct. 30/95, p. 9)

The preceding excerpt is an example of what Borko and Livingston (1989, p. 483) claim is characteristic of a particular stage in teachers' development, that of "improvisational performance." This stage is characterized by teachers' use of a mental script for the outline of a lesson. The rest is filled in during the teaching of the lesson, and adjustments are made depending on the classroom circumstances at the time. Fran's preference for this approach to planning and teaching is a reminder of the diversity to be found among student teachers and reveals how important it is for cooperating teachers to spend time getting to know their student teachers well and discovering what their needs are as learners. Moreover, cooperating teachers may want to consider that their student teachers' approach to planning and teaching may be quite different from their own preferred style and therefore may require a certain amount of

sensitivity and latitude.

Learning to be Flexible

Carol claimed that it was her first cooperating teacher who made a point of reminding her very early in the practicum about the need to be flexible during teaching and to view unexpected events as an opportunity to learn to become flexible and adaptable while teaching:

> Well, one thing with Donna [cooperating teacher]. It just came up all the time that you have to be flexible and that your schedule often changes. People come in and for whatever reasons schedules change and you just have to go with the flow. (Interview 7, Oct. 30/95, p. 3)

It would apear that Carol's cooperating teacher's attempt to reinforce the idea that plans should be flexible and responsive to change echoed the advice offered by Clark and Yinger (1980) that "prospective teachers need to experience the full range of teacher planning and the challenge of making the many tradeoffs, adjustments, and fine tunings of their plans that are inevitably necessary in the partially unpredictable world of the classroom" (p. 15-16).

Summary

I have presented in these accounts the different ways that these student teachers responded to unexpected events during their teaching in a practicum classroom. The examples discussed reveal that this unpredictability appeared to have influenced the way the student teachers thought about planning and teaching. In some cases it led the student teachers to reconsider their approach to teaching to better accommodate the changing circumstances of the classroom setting. As well, these findings highlight the various idiosyncratic

responses student teachers had to unexpected events and serve as a reminder of the different styles, strengths, and predispositions that influenced their early growth in teaching.

These student teachers were learning well how to "do teaching and planning" in the complex environment and rhythms of today's schools. The accounts in this chapter make it clear that the unpredictability of school and classroom life plays a large role in student teacher learning. Each responded to and found a way to work with this inescapable dimension of classroom teaching. This may be one of the reasons that so many graduates say that they learned the most in their practicum.

Recalling my earlier question as to whether the student teachers would view unexpected events as barriers to teaching or opportunities to learn to become flexible and adaptable, I believe the findings demonstrate that they responded in a variety of ways to accommodate the complexity of classroom life in their teaching and planning. Rather than viewing interruptions to their teaching as barriers, they sought ways to change their approaches and thinking that would better suit the needs of their students and still provide them with a sense of comfort and control over what took place in the classroom. The experience of the unexpected in teaching in the classroom helped these student teachers to think about the different facets that influence planning and instructional practices. What has been particularly interesting to notice is the way that unexpected classroom events had a critical role to play in influencing the student teachers' professional growth. Having experiences dealing with

unexpected events during their teaching appeared to help the student teachers better appreciate the importance of approaching planning with both a clearer and more flexible outlook.

Chapter 8

ROLE OF MATERIALS AND RESOURCES IN STUDENT TEACHERS' PLANNING

During the initial interviews, all six student teachers raised the topic of materials and resources. What stood out in these conversations was their apparent preoccupation with expanding their knowledge of materials, resources, and instructional methods. A common teaching goal for most of the student teachers was to gain knowledge about where to locate resources and materials and to learn to use them efficiently during their planning. This preoccupation led to my wondering, "How does knowledge and access to resources and materials affect student teachers' planning?" It was interesting to discover what the student teachers identified as their primary source of information for planning and their understanding of the role of resources in teaching and students' learning. Bush (1986) states that during planning, student teachers most frequently cite the following sources: themselves, textbooks, cooperating teachers, and university course materials. In my study I wanted to learn what sources of knowledge student teachers appeared to use predominantly during planning, the role of the Program of Studies for them, and how their teaching experiences influenced their thinking about resources for planning and instruction.

Pre-Practicum Interests in Resources

How does knowledge of and access to resources affect student teachers' planning?

During the pre-practicum interviews, all six student teachers spontaneously expressed an interest in learning more about resources and materials. For three student teachers, expanding their knowledge of and access to resources and teaching ideas was identified as an important teaching goal. As well, these student teachers hoped that their cooperating teachers would offer advice about how to use and select material for classroom use.

One student teacher, for example, had already examined the Program of Studies to become familiar with the various subject matter topics that were going to be covered. She hoped that her cooperating teacher would give her the textbooks at the start of the practicum in order to give her an idea of how the topics would be presented. Another student teacher was interested in learning the various ways in which to use materials and resources that would motivate her students to want to learn. A third intended to see herself as the major source of ideas and hoped to learn how to be creative during the practicum.

Location of Resources

Amy's pre-practicum teaching goal was to gain knowledge of the various resources and materials available and to be given some help in choosing materials beyond those available in the classroom:

> Hopefully I'll know more of where to go to get some resources or what I'll need to be looking for. Right now it feels like there's just tons out there. Where to go to get your things to help you plan and decide what you're

going to do. (Amy, Interview 1, Aug. 28/95, p. 6)

Susan was concerned that her lack of familiarity with the school's resources and with what was available from outside sources would hinder her planning efforts. She wanted to be given information about where to obtain materials that were both practical and affordable:

> The other thing that will be hard is finding all the resources that I want, quickly, because I'm not familiar totally with the school or even the city, where you can get everything . . . . And maybe some ideas on practical kind of resources that aren't too expensive that you can use in class. (Susan, Interview 1, Aug. 24/95, pp. 7-8)

Carol hoped that during her practicum she would have ample opportunity to expand her repertoire of available materials and resources for classroom use and expected that she would spend some time becoming acquainted with unfamiliar material:

> I'm hoping that they will expose me to a lot more resources and materials . . . . I know that the first year of teaching is always a struggle because you haven't gone through all those materials before, but I guess I hope that it gives me some resources. (Carol, Interview 1, Aug. 23/95, pp. 8-9)

Textbooks

Lynn was the only student teacher to identify the Program of Studies (curriculum guides) as an important source of information for planning. To prepare herself for the upcoming practicum, Lynn had examined the Program of Studies to familiarize herself with the topics of study. She was anxious to have some of the classroom textbooks prior to the start of her practicum so that she could examine what topics would be covered:

> I've already looked at the Program of Studies for this grade to see what kind of subjects, or what kind of topics are in each subject. So, I have a general idea already. I'd be glad if she gave me the textbooks. I'd love to see what we're going to be covering. (Lynn, Interview 1, Aug. 23/95, p. 11)

Motivating Students

Barb's approach to using materials and resources was from the perspective of motivating the students' interest in the lesson as well as offering some challenging activities:

> I guess I'll be mostly looking at what can we do with these materials. Like what kind of activities can we do, what kind of supporting activities or main task can we do that would be interesting and challenging enough but not too difficult. Also think of some fun ways to get them to learn, that's what I'd be looking for. (Barb, Interview 1, Sept. 8/95, p. 9)

Creativity and Uniqueness

Of the six student teachers, Fran was the only one to describe her preference for not using commercially produced materials. Instead she wanted to learn how to create and develop her own materials and resources:

> I guess that's what kind of scares me now is am I going to be able to think up ideas . . . . So I'd like to know how to be creative. Hopefully I can get some of my own ideas without relying on books and stuff like that. (Fran, Interview 1, Aug. 30/95, p. 4)

Fran's response is reminiscent of McNamara's (1995) findings from a study that explored how student teachers' instructional practices were influenced by both their cooperating teachers and teacher educators. The researcher reported that student teachers "are most likely to nominate themselves as the source which influenced their teaching" (p. 58).

The preceding accounts reveal that these student teachers were thinking about the way that they could expand their knowledge of resources and materials while in the practicum classroom. Four student teachers thought that learning about the various materials and resources available would enable them to have a concrete place to start their thinking about planning at the start of the practicum when their knowledge of the students and context of the classroom would be limited. Another student teacher looked forward to selecting materials and resources based on her knowledge of students' interests and abilities to both motivate and challenge her future students. The remaining student teacher saw the practicum as an opportunity to learn how to develop her own teaching ideas and materials.

Resources Used During the Practicum

Throughout the practicum the student teachers described their planning experiences with a variety of resources: university course materials and teaching ideas, themselves, students, textbooks and commercially prepared materials, other colleagues, and the Program of Studies. Common to all six student teachers were their attempts to use some of the teaching ideas and materials from various university methods courses in their planning. For some of the student teachers, having the opportunity to use their own ideas and materials during planning appeared to enhance their self-image as teachers.

The student teachers used their expanding knowledge of the students' interests and capabilities to assist in the selection of materials and learning activities. Their reliance on textbooks and commercially prepared materials

was most noticeable at the start of the practicum. As the student teachers gained teaching experience, however they became more selective in the way they chose to use the teaching suggestions offered. For two student teachers, exchanging teaching ideas and resources with other colleagues appeared to enhance their professional development. Lastly, for all student teachers but one, the program of studies continued to have a central role in their planning as they attempted to select activities and materials that would reflect the objectives selected. The student teacher that was the exception she adopted the approach taken by her cooperating teacher which was to first examine the resources and materials available in the classroom.

Resources from University Courses

The learning theories and instructional strategies acquired from formal preparation courses are, according to Browne and Hoover (1990), used by student teachers "variably at best" (p. 22). In this section, I will present examples of the different ways that the student teachers, from the start of the practicum, deliberately attempted to use in their planning some of the teaching ideas and materials presented in their university courses. The student teachers' use of university course resources and instructional strategies continued throughout the twelve weeks of the practicum.

Amy's major source of knowledge for her planning of a mathematics lesson was the mathematics textbook from a former university course:

> I looked in my university textbook for math from last year which is fairly user friendly . . . and I used experiences from that math class also from university. (Amy, Interview 3, Sept. 29/95, p. 11)

Three months later, Amy once again identified how she had used ideas from a previous cohort course and the practicum seminar to help her plan a novel study unit:

> In the L. A. cohort course they did one on drama and I was thinking of using it in my novel study unit because the professor had done it before and I have quite a bit of information already but it was nice. There was a mention of a couple of other books that you could look at and that kind of thing. And some people from our cohort shared with us what they had done already, so that was good because you got some other ideas. (Amy, Interview 9, Nov. 17/95, p. 2)

To prepare for an upcoming physical education lesson, Susan used material from a university methods course and resources available in the classroom:

> I went to my resources. I have, of course, the one from University, so I looked in there and I have a couple of other resource books that I found in the classroom. I found some ideas there for warm-ups, but I'm not doing what I found there for warm-ups. I'm doing something I learned in university for that. (Susan, Interview 5, Oct. 17/95, p. 1)

Carol, during her planning for a mathematics lesson, reported using the approach modeled by her mathematics professor with its emphasis on incorporating real-life situations into the learning situation:

> I looked at my math text from last year, and some of my notes, and that's where I got some of these things from, from my course at the university. (Carol, Interview 3, Oct. 2/95, p. 5)

> Yeah, well, I like that prof's way of teaching and she had a lot of good ideas. Trying to make it real life. Trying to get them involved one way or another. (Carol, Interview 3, Oct. 2/95, p. 9)

Barb used material from both university art and language arts courses in combination with her cooperating teacher's poetry resource to develop her

lesson on writing haikus:

> Yeah, I used my art book from last year from a course I took. I had a few haikus in my language book and a few haikus that were in Gail's [cooperating teacher] poetry stuff. So I didn't have to write my own. (Barb, Interview 3, Oct. 3/95, p. 4)

Fran claimed that during her planning she relied extensively on the music materials obtained from a methods course:

> I'm using some of the materials from my music course. We have this book of songs and stuff that she [teacher educator] had made up for us and I'm using those. I'm making very good use of those. I'm very glad that I have those. (Fran, Interview 2, Oct. 2/95, p. 10)

Of all the student teachers, Lynn made a point of stating her appreciation for the ideas presented in her formal preparation courses as she often found herself using these ideas during her planning and teaching. She was particularly grateful that her teacher educators had made a point of encouraging her to include additional learning activities in the lesson plan. Lynn recalled how this advice proved to be particularly valuable during a recent mathematics lesson:

> Really pay attention to the planning ideas that they give in university because most of them do work, especially in the lesson plans. When I started, I hated having to write all that stuff down. I wondered, "Do I really need all that?" And sometimes you do. Today for my math examples, I needed every one of those examples in there because I couldn't have thought them up at the board on the spur of the moment. (Lynn, Interview 4, Oct. 12/95, p. 9)

A few weeks later, Lynn once again discussed her appreciation for the information presented during her cohort courses as it enabled her to think of

different and interesting ways to motivate students' learning:

> I love language and through the courses through the university, which actually have been very helpful, I've discovered many ways to make it more exciting. (Lynn, Interview 8, Nov. 9/95, p. 3)

Despite having taken methods courses quite some time previously, the student teachers were able to recall what they had learned. Their instructors had presented materials and ideas in such a way that they were readily retrievable and deemed worthwhile.

Self as a Source in Planning

The interview excerpts presented in this section highlight the way that four student teachers specifically discussed their own resourcefulness, creativity, sense of autonomy, and growing self-confidence with their ability to plan lessons based on their own ideas, resources, and materials. These student teachers demonstrated their resourcefulness in developing learning activities that were both unique and interesting for their students. Their reports also emphasize that being free to use materials and teaching ideas beyond those available in the classroom was important for their growing sense of accomplishment and self-confidence in themselves as teachers.

In the pre-practicum interviews, Fran was the only one who expressed concern about her ability to be creative in her lesson planning and did not want to rely on commercially produced material. During the practicum I noticed several occasions when she appeared to be quite creative and resourceful in planning lessons. For example, during her planning for a music lesson, Fran

deliberately selected materials that she felt would be interesting for her students and increase their participation in the lesson:

> I had a box with rain gear in it and stuff because it was a song. It had a little rhyme, and it mentioned rain and stuff. So I said to the kids, "What do you think I would need to wear if I was going to dress up to go along with this rhyme?" Then they'd say, "You need an umbrella, rain boots, and a raincoat." I'd dig it out of my box . . . . And the kids seemed to get interested. So I find that if I can use more visual things too, that's what I like to do. (Fran, Interview 2, Oct. 2/95, p. 5)

On another occasion Fran was determined to plan lessons that would motivate her students. Despite an earlier art lesson that did not proceed as well as she had hoped, Fran was not deterred from trying again to find unique and interesting ways to introduce a lesson:

> In art on Friday I tried to be creative, but it didn't work. But I tried. I just tried to do something that I thought would be interesting. I tried to do brainstorming. I know that they've done that before. It was just brainstorming different types of chocolate bars or stuff that the kids liked, but it didn't seem to go over too well with them. But I thought, oh well, it's something that I'm trying to think up myself to go along with this lesson. (Fran, Interview 8, Nov. 13/95, pp. 2-3)

As one of the practicum seminar activities, the student teachers were asked to re-examine their journal reflections from the practicum and share anything they may have noticed that had changed over the twelve weeks. During our final interview, Fran discussed her feeling of pride at discovering how she had managed to come up with some interesting and innovative teaching ideas for her lessons and how it no longer seemed to be a major concern of hers as it initially was at the start of the practicum:

> I've noticed that I've been able to come up with in music, especially, ideas on the spur of the moment. I've noticed that about myself. I'm glad to be able to. I was worried about not being able to think up any ideas, but they

do come to you when you need them. (Fran, Interview 11, Dec. 4/95, p. 3)

During planning for an art lesson, Carol described how she sought out materials beyond those available in the classroom. Carol had a friend who worked in a library and who offered her some materials on the theme she was planning for an upcoming art lesson:

> Well, she [cooperating teacher] told me that they were doing a monster theme, so I was looking around for some monster stuff and my friend came up with things from the library where she works. Two folders of monster things, so that's where I got this [a cut-out of a monster] and this was sort of the beginning of the art idea. (Carol, Interview 5, Oct. 20/95, p. 1)

Despite having as a major pre-practicum goal the wish to be given ideas and materials, Susan came to feel somewhat constricted by having to work around her cooperating teacher's materials. However, Susan did report that she was given the freedom to select which materials and activities to use for her lessons and supplemented these with other resources she located herself:

> I just basically work with a lot of her material under her advice and she gives me general guidelines. We should be working on consonant sounds now. I go through some of her resources and pick out some sheets on that and find books that if I read those stories will help practice those sounds. Still I'm working a lot with her material. (Susan, Interview 5, Oct. 17/95, p. 3)

Another way in which Susan used herself as a major source for ideas is presented in the following example. She reinforced the skill of estimation by having the students figure out the number of hours of sunshine per year for each of the capital cities in Canada while providing them with the opportunity to practise other critical thinking skills (analyzing information):

> So, today I decided as I was looking through the social studies books I thought maybe we could do numbers concerning distances from one city to another, or something like that, but I couldn't find anything like that, but I found a graph that said, numbers of hours of sunshine per year in different capital cities. So, I'm going to have them estimate what they think would be the number of hours. (Susan, Interview 8, Nov. 14/95, p. 1)

Lynn believed it was important for her growth as a teacher to be given the opportunity to plan and teach lessons based on her own teaching ideas in order to find out if she could plan a successful lesson. More importantly, Lynn claimed that it gave her a sense of control over what would take place in the lesson:

> I feel more like a teacher basically because I have control over some of the lessons and I can get them to do things that I want them to do. It's not something that somebody else has planned and I'm carrying out. I really like that because I like to see how my ideas work in the classroom, and I think that's what's made me feel like a teacher the most. (Lynn, Interview 4, Oct. 12/95, pp. 4-5)

From these examples it is apparent that those experiences in which the four student teachers had the opportunity to demonstrate their skill at being creative, independent, and resourceful were important to their growth as teachers. Witnessing their own teaching ideas being transformed into successful lessons was for these four student teachers a significant accomplishment. Relying on themselves as a major source for planning was an integral part of their approach to planning and provided them with the knowledge and reassurance that they could repeat this experience in their future classrooms.

Students' Influence on Student Teachers' Use of Resources

During planning, student teachers apply their growing knowledge of children and their increasing repertoire of instructional strategies to assist them in the selection of materials and resources. The following examples demonstrate how some student teachers used their growing knowledge of students to inform their planning for future lessons.

Susan described the criteria she used to select materials for the classroom. To start, Susan determined whether the material was at a level appropriate to that of the students. As well, she considered the ease or difficulty with which the material could be implemented. Finally, she considered the potential impact that these materials would have on students' behaviour:

> I'm looking for things like, will they be able to understand this, the material won't be too hard or easy for them . . . . I look at whether it's something that can be implemented in this classroom, or are they going to go wild? Or will they find it totally boring? I kind of relate everything more to their particular interests and ability level, which I didn't have that context before. (Susan, Interview 10, Nov. 28/95, p. 2)

Sensing her students' growing restlessness with the approach to a novel study unit, Barb considered an alternative way by which to present the lesson that would be interesting for her students:

> I guess I was just looking for something a little different because I know they were getting kind of bored with doing the novel study sheets, and we did this interview and stuff like that, and I just thought something a little more creative and fun. (Barb, Interview 9, Nov. 28/95, p. 2)

Amy claimed to choose materials and resources on the basis of their ability to meet the wide range of needs present in her classroom. She preferred

to select materials that had as their major goal an educational purpose rather than a means to control students' behaviour:

> Well, I know what's, for sure, going to be too simple, and I guess the opposite, too, too difficult for them. Like I said before, just knowing what they know already. I know that if it's just repetition, they'll be bored, or it'll just be busy work . . . . I'm not looking for (pause) again, just an activity that'll fit anyone. I'm looking for something that will challenge them all, and now that I know them, I know what that might be. Also, if it will keep their interest. (Amy, Interview 11, Dec. 1/95, p. 2)

The preceding accounts offered by these student teachers appear to demonstrate that as they gain knowledge of their students' needs and interests, they use this information to assist them in their selection of materials and resources during their planning for the classroom. This is similar to what Borko and Niles (1987) reported in their study of experienced teachers' planning. The researchers claimed that experienced teachers identified information about students as a major influencing factor in their decision-making during planning.

In an attempt to capture and maintain her students' attention during a lesson, Lynn tried to choose resources that were new and appealing:

> I just look for things that are different, that they probably wouldn't have encountered before, or if they had, it was in a different context. And so I just look for things that will capture their attention quickly, and once I have their attention, it's generally not too hard to hold it, so basically attention getters, activities that will seem fun to them and they don't feel like they're learning anything, but lo and behold, it's happening. (Lynn, Interview 11, Dec. 1/95, p. 3)

Goodman (1986) argues that student teachers need to assume a thoughtful stance when considering instructional resources, teaching strategies, and learning theories. Therefore it was encouraging to find evidence that some

student teachers had used their expanding knowledge of students to assist them in their selection of materials and resources to be used in the classroom. It was clear in conversations with these four student teachers that as they prepared to select materials while planning, they were thinking of their students' responses to them. There are many ways to be thoughtful about resources and strategies, but for the student teachers in this practicum anticipating students' needs and responses was a clear first step.

Lynn recalled how, during one of their discussions, her cooperating teacher made the point of emphasizing the importance of always keeping an eye out for resources that could be used in future lessons:

> She's shown me that if you see a resource and you don't need it right now, grab it anyways because you might need it later on. (Lynn, Interview 7, Nov. 2/95, p. 4)

Amy, like Lynn, reported how her cooperating teacher constantly stressed the need to be on the look out for materials that could be used in other lessons and modeled to her the importance of selecting materials that would be interesting for the students while in keeping with the goals of the program of studies:

> She does take a lot of time gathering resources and information, especially on something new, like some of the new units in science and stuff. So, she has, just by her actual doing it, or telling me, okay, you can look here, it just let me know that there's so much that you can tap into and use, and that you do need to get all that stuff first before you go to teach a lesson. She's really active in finding new things that really challenge the kids and will be interesting but will still get the point across in the curriculum and stuff. (Amy, Interview 8, Nov. 3/95, p. 4)

The advice offered by these two cooperating teachers is similar to that suggested by Stanilus (1994), that cooperating teachers model using multiple sources of knowledge in their own planning and decision-making to encourage student teachers to use more than a single source of knowledge during planning.

Role of Textbooks and Other Commercially Prepared Materials

The predominant influence that textbooks have in student teachers' planning has been identified in several research studies (Bush, 1986; Clark & Elmore, 1981; McCutcheon, 1980; Sardo-Brown, 1993). From the findings early in the practicum, I noticed that the student teachers' planning was primarily based on suggestions offered in the teachers' guide and textbook, particularly in the subject area of mathematics. As the practicum unfolded, I found that a significant indicator of their growth as teachers was the way in which they no longer simply implemented the suggestions offered by these commercially prepared materials. Instead they sought to find resources that reflected the needs and interests of their students. The following accounts portray the various ways that some student teachers came to use textbooks and commercially prepared materials in their planning.

During the initial weeks in the practicum, Lynn's planning in the subject of mathematics followed the order outlined in the approved mathematics textbook as it was similar to that of the program of studies:

> No, because the textbook for math is approved by the curriculum and so it basically follows the program of studies in order. (Lynn, Interview 3, Oct. 5/95, p.5)

Amy, like Lynn, relied mainly on the suggestions offered in the math teacher's guide:

> I have a textbook that I looked through. I looked briefly through the teacher's manual . . . . Yeah, I just looked at the textbook and tried to do it that way. (Amy, Interview 2, Sept. 22/95, p. 1)

These accounts appear to correspond with Bush's (1986) claim that student teachers' planning for mathematics was based primarily on the textbook. However Clark and Elmore (1981) state that even experienced teachers during planning will rely primarly on the content found in textbooks, teacher's guides, and related materials.

This reliance on commercially produced materials and textbooks for planning was not restricted primarily to the subject of mathematics. In the following account, Lynn was excited about having the opportunity to use a new social studies unit teacher's guide with its prepared lessons. She felt that the commercially prepared lesson plans would be most beneficial to teachers who had limited experience teaching this topic:

> So I guess for my teaching the new social studies unit for those three weeks, I'll be teaching out of the new textbook . . . . I'll have the new teacher's guide and it's awesome. So basically if you don't have a clue about what you're doing, that thing will walk you right through it and it also gives you options to go this way or that way. (Lynn, Interview 5, Oct.19/95, pp. 4-5)

In this particular cohort program, the student teachers did not participate in a social studies methods course prior to the practicum and consequently there was the potential that their first intensive acquaintance with this subject was in

the practicum classroom.

Lynn's description of planning for an upcoming social studies unit serves as a reminder of the challenge facing students training to be elementary generalist teachers. As part of their training, student teachers are expected to become familiar with the learning goals of all elementary grades and subjects contained in the program of studies. Therefore, Lynn's relief at having been given a teacher's manual with its ready-made lesson plans is understandable, as it provided her with a sense of comfort and an immediate guide by which to conduct her planning and teaching in an unfamiliar subject area. Browne and Hoover (1990, p. 23) remind us that the "selection of materials may be a function of the availability of sufficient planning time. Many of the least-used activities require a great deal of planning and effort, a quality which may be at a premium for beginning and student teachers."

The preceding examples clarify what the student teachers experienced when they prepared to teach new or unfamiliar topics. Despite having gained teaching experience, student teachers may feel as if they are starting all over again when they find themselves having to plan lessons in a subject in which they lack experience or sufficient background knowledge. However once they have had time to familiarize themselves with the content to be taught, they are able to use their recently developed skills of planning and expanded repertoire of instructional strategies to make this process less overwhelming and complex.

Later on in the practicum, as the student teachers gained knowledge of the students and the classroom and teaching experience, they began to expand

upon the teaching suggestions offered in the textbooks and to search for ways to make the learning more personal to the needs of their classes. The following examples portray the way that three student teachers, during their planning of mathematics lessons, attempted to go beyond what was offered in the textbook or teacher's guide to make their lessons more meaningful and interesting for their students.

Carol not only used the textbook to guide her planning but also tried to incorporate some of the ideas she had acquired from a methods course:

> Well, the Math Quest, they're using the Math Quest books, so I looked at the teacher's guide. I looked at my math text from last year, and some of my notes, and that's where I got some of these things from my course at the university. (Carol, Interview 3, Oct. 2/95, p. 5)

Susan, in preparation for teaching an upcoming mathematics lesson, first consulted the program of studies but found it did not provide her with adequate information and turned to the textbook for more ideas. Still not completely satisfied, she tried to include some real-life problems for the students to work on as a way of making learning more meaningful:

> We're doing place value in math, and so I looked through the program of studies to see what they should be learning about place value, but I didn't find out too much. Then I looked at their Math Quest because Terry [cooperating teacher] uses that and also their books. And I thought, I know we're supposed to make all this practical and use real world situations and everything, so I was trying to think of what we could do, what kind of problem I could set for them to work on with place value. (Susan, Interview 8, Nov. 14/95, p.1)

Barb as well tried to go beyond what was available in the classroom textbook and went back to material from a mathematics course. Unfortunately, she reported being unable to find anything that would enhance the lesson:

> Just the workbook, actually. I sort of looked for some ideas in my math book from last year, but I didn't really see anything new that I could do with this. (Barb, Interview 4, Oct. 10/95, p. 3)

The preceding accounts trace the student teachers' growth as teachers from basing their planning exclusively on the textbook to one which reflected their desire to expand upon the teaching ideas presented. This adherence to following the textbook was most noticeable in mathematics. However as the student teachers gained knowledge of the classroom and their students, they began to become more self-conscious about developing their own ideas and using materials other than just the textbook. This was not always an easy task to accomplish, and at times the student teachers found that despite wanting to use other teaching resources these weren't always readily available. What was particularly illuminating was the way in which one student teacher, finding herself faced with planning an unfamiliar content area, sought comfort in having commercially prepared lesson plans readily available to use in her classroom. This raises an important question: If student teachers in their planning do not receive help or encouragement to go beyond the textbook, will they become teachers who just follow the textbook?

Other Colleagues

Two student teachers sought out colleagues for teaching ideas and materials. These experiences had an important role to play in their growth as

teachers, as they were able to access ideas and perspectives beyond those available in the practicum classroom.

Of the two student teachers, Carol was the only one to seek help from other staff members in locating materials and teaching ideas on a regular basis. As a result, Carol developed a reciprocal relationship with another teacher that involved the exchange of teaching ideas and materials. This experience provided Carol with a great deal of personal satisfaction, as she felt that her ideas were considered worthwhile by another teacher:

> With the art, I started asking around other people that might have had resources. And there's this one teacher. She's always giving me stuff now. So I just go to her. I can go back and forth with her and I've been able to give her stuff, so that's nice because it's more reciprocal . . . (Carol, Interview 5, Oct. 30/95, p. 6)

> I think I'm more often looking for other materials, more free to ask other teachers for resources and to share what I've been doing. And I mean it's helped because I've noticed that some teachers that I've shared with then later they'll come to me and say, "Oh yeah, you were working on this." There's a little more relationship between the teachers and I think that's helped. (Carol, Interview 9, Nov. 13/95, p. 4)

During her final interview, Lynn suggested that student teachers actively seek help from sources beyond their cooperating teachers (other teachers and fellow student teachers):

> Some other things to keep in mind is don't be afraid to ask other teachers. They're wonderful resources. I mean, at first I guess I was a little nervous because I was too chicken to ask Karen [cooperating teacher] for anything unless she offered it. I mostly went out and found my own. My life probably could have been made a lot easier if I would have just asked. But after I started getting brave and asking her, I was able to ask another teacher here. They were all so willing to share and that's nice to see and I would recommend that. Even your own fellow student teachers. It's very

> helpful to go to them. They have different ideas. You can present them with an idea and they can help you expand on it just because they're coming from a different view point. I think that's really valuable. (Lynn, Interview 12, Dec. 7/95, pp. 2-3)

Having experience working with other colleagues and the opportunity to share teaching ideas and materials may enable student teachers to seek out and initiate this type of reciprocal relationship in their beginning teacher school.

Role of the Program of Studies

At different points in the practicum, the student teachers described their experiences with using the Program of Studies in their planning. All but one of the six student teachers considered materials and resources from the perspective of how well these appeared to fit in meeting the objectives outlined in the Program of Studies. This approach to planning was similar to what they had described during the pre-practicum interviews. The emphasis was on planning lessons and selecting activities that reflected the learner objectives found in the Program of Studies.

According to Carol, when she examines materials she tries to find a match between activities and the curricular objectives and the opportunity for students to engage hands-on in their learning:

> Well, looking at objectives, how the resource fits with some of the objectives, like in my science unit for bridges, what kind of activities they had that would be engaging, would be hands-on. Hands-on has been a big word in my week, the last week and a half. And how those kinds of things can put together a lesson. (Carol, Interview 11, Nov. 27/95, p. 3)

Susan described her approach to planning a science unit as having started with the Program of Studies with lessons based on achievement of the learner objectives:

> Oh, for the science unit it's the foundation. Because it's the new science curriculum it has very specific learner expectations. I basically did an idea web with them [learner expectations] for this unit and all my lessons are based on one of those learner expectations. (Susan, Interview 3, Oct. 3/95, p. 3)

At the end of the practicum, Fran claimed that she still wanted to learn how to plan to meet the learner objectives in the Program of Studies and to ensure that the teaching ideas she selected were in alignment with these stated objectives:

> I guess one of the concerns that I have is knowing how to follow the curriculum, and where you should be at at certain times of the year. That's one, also what kind of ideas you can use as long as you're following the curriculum. (Fran, Interview 11, Dec. 4/95, p. 1)

At the start of the practicum, Barb began planning with the objectives from the Program of Studies and the expectations of performance for a particular grade level. During her planning, she preferred to focus on meeting one or two objectives a lesson:

> Yeah, actually I was just thinking about that too. I should mention that I try to think of the objectives of what I'm trying to do here and that usually includes looking at the Program of Studies or curriculum. Thinking OK, "What are the kids supposed to be getting out of this experience and what am I aiming for?" Then I usually try to break that down even further, rather than having a bunch of objectives, trying to keep it to one or two simple ones. (Barb, Interview 2, Sept. 28/95, p. 2)

As the end of the practicum approached, Lynn appeared to no longer rely solely on the objectives provided in a textbook. Instead she now included as part of her planning process an examination of the learner expectations contained in the Program of Studies to determine if these were reflected in her lessons. Furthermore, Lynn reported having spent time becoming familiar with the Program of Studies and its objectives for the grades preceding and following the one she was presently teaching. This, she believed, would provide her with a more expansive view of what students had and are expected to learn:

> Some goals I set for myself are I'd like to become familiar with more subject areas and I made an effort this weekend to go through the Program of Studies. I mean I've gone through it before, especially for this grade, but I tried to look at the grade before and after as well, so I can kind of see where things fit in the overall plan. And so I'm trying to make more of an effort to see if the lesson I'm teaching actually does fit into the Program of Studies . . . . I just want to sit down and see, OK, can I find an objective in here that's actually in the Program of Studies. (Lynn, Interview 8, Nov. 9/95, p. 6)

In contrast, Amy's approach to planning was different from the other five student teachers as she preferred to begin her planning with looking first at the materials and resources available to her in the classroom. Amy claimed that she preferred to know in advance the type of resources available to her before beginning her planning:

> I'd look at the resources first, usually. That's partly how it's presented to me because at least from my standpoint I need to know what I have to work with. And because I don't know the school or the resources they have or even all the resources that Joan [cooperating teacher] has to offer, I usually get that information first. I like to know that first. And then I see what kind of activities that can be done and then I would fit the objectives into that. And change the activities or do extra things if I hadn't met certain

ones. (Amy, Interview 10, Nov. 24/95, p. 4)

Unlike the other five student teachers, Amy preferred to begin her planning by first determining what materials were available and considering ways in which these could be used during a lesson and only afterwards considered the objectives that were being taught. This is similar to what McCutcheon (1980) described in a study that examined experienced teachers' approach to planning. Findings revealed that experienced teachers begin their planning with examining the materials and textbooks immediately available.

Summary

During the pre-practicum interviews, as the student teachers anticipated having to select materials and resources to use in their planning and teaching, they were eager to be able to access these in an expedient manner. For four student teachers, expanding their knowledge of available resources and materials seemed to be a concrete starting place for their thinking about planning and teaching in the practicum classroom. Once the practicum was underway, the interviews revealed the various ways these student teachers used not only the materials and teaching ideas available in the classroom but those presented in their university courses. The student teachers also emphasized the importance of using themselves as sources of resources or ideas. Having the opportunity to use their own ideas and materials enabled these student teachers to feel independent of their cooperating teachers and more confident in their ability to plan and teach successful lessons.

The student teachers' expanding knowledge of students' interests and abilities was clearly evident in their descriptions of how they went about selecting materials and resources for the classroom. A major concern for them was to find activities that would be both stimulating and challenging for their students.

At the start of the practicum and when having to plan an unfamiliar subject, the student teachers found themselves relying heavily on the suggestions offered in the teacher's guides and textbooks; but once they began acquiring knowledge of the students and the classroom and had become more familiar with the content, they began to use these ideas as a springboard for other possibilities and could confidently reject those that they felt would not suit the needs of the class. While student teachers became increasingly committed to enhancing textbook or workbook math activities, this sometimes continued to be a difficult task for them.

Other colleagues were identified by two student teachers as a source of knowledge used during planning. By seeking out help beyond that available in the classroom, they had the opportunity to experience an exchange of ideas and materials that proved to be mutually satisfying. As well, these experiences enabled them to consider the possibilities of a lesson from different perspectives.

At the start of the practicum, the Program of Studies was used by five student teachers as the primary source for the selection of learner objectives on which to base their planning. Materials and resources were selected on the

basis of how well they reflected these curricular objectives.

At the beginning of this chapter, the question "How does knowledge of and access to resources and materials affect student teachers' planning?" was posed. This question has been examined by a number of researchers (Brown & Wendel, 1993; Bush, 1986; Kwo, 1994; McNamara, 1995; Stanulis, 1994). I believe the answer to this question has the potential to reveal the ways in which student teachers think about and use materials and resources in the practicum classroom and, more importantly, to trace their growth as teachers. Following the student teachers throughout the entire twelve week practicum provided me with the opportunity to witness and discuss their approaches and attitudes towards using materials and resources during planning. As they gained teaching experience, the student teachers became aware of the need to go beyond the teaching suggestions offered in teacher's guides and textbooks as they sought to find materials that would be interesting and suitable for their particular classrooms.

Chapter 9
UNCOVERINGS AND REFLECTIONS

> I think it's been pretty valuable. I've learned a lot about teaching that you just can't learn from just sitting in a lecture hall listening to it or whatever. You have to be doing it to learn. Overall I think it was a very tiring experience, but it was also very good. It felt sort of satisfying and fulfilling. . . . I've discovered that I like teaching. I wasn't sure if I was going to love it or not. It's been really good but I've really realized that teaching is always growing. I know it's not like I'm this packaged person that's all ready to teach and I know everything about teaching. I know it's going to be years and years and years and I'll still be always growing. I think it's a very challenging job. (Barb, Interview 10, Dec. 5/95, p. 5)

The Start of My Research Story

My research story began with a desire to study student teachers' approaches to and experiences of planning in order to understand how they started, thought about, and grew in the process of becoming teachers. The purpose of the study was to contribute to our understanding of student teachers' planning experiences in a practicum. It examined how six student teachers approached, thought about, and changed their planning activities prior to and during a twelve week practicum. The intent of my study was not to prove theory or to predict behavior; rather it was to offer a reconstruction of the planning experiences of six student teachers. My research study was undertaken in the form of interpretive inquiry. In interpretive inquiry the researcher's work is guided by both a practical, concernful question and a sense of the complexity of human interaction (Packer & Addison, 1989). My practical concern was about how cooperating teachers and teacher educators could be helpful to student teachers as they develop their planning approaches. As Ellis (In Press) has

articulated, solution ideas are usually well within our repertoires once we have a better understanding of the problem itself. In this research report I have made an effort to enable myself and my readers to see and understand student teachers' growth processes in planning more clearly.

In interpretive inquiry, the search is not for "timeless truth" or "validated knowledge" as in the objective validation of traditional approaches to human inquiry. Instead, evaluating an interpretive account entails asking whether an answer to the question which motivated the inquiry has been uncovered. To judge whether an answer has been uncovered, we consider whether the interpretive account is convincing, plausible, fits with other material we know, and offers direction for future action (Packer & Addison, 1989). In evaluating an interpretive account, one also asks whether the researcher's understanding has been transformed.

My preunderstandings of student teachers' planning experiences were influenced by my own underlying beliefs and assumptions about the planning process. Prior to the onset of the practicum, I spent time reflecting on my own biases and conceptions about planning in order to enhance my awareness of them and their potential to unduly influence the direction of the interviews. For example, I believed that planning played a critical role in teaching and needed to reflect a certain amount of flexibility in order to be easily modified to better accommodate changing circumstances. These pre-understandings were recorded in my research journal. I found this experience to be quite valuable as I had to reflect on my own ideas and thoughts about the role that planning plays

in teaching and the knowledge I had about student teachers and their planning. My pre-understandings of student teachers' planning experiences were reconsidered in the light of the interpretive account of this study. I did this by comparing my interpretative account with these pre-understandings to enable me to better understand and reflect upon what had been uncovered.

The following are some of the pre-understandings that I held about planning and student teachers. From my experiences as a classroom teacher, I viewed planning as playing a critical role in teaching for I believed that being well prepared facilitated the smooth implementation of lessons. My lesson plans were in the form of outlines that described in general terms what would happen during the lesson. The outlines showed little evidence of the various forms of knowledge that I had used, as much of the planning was carried out mentally. As a cooperating teacher, I remembered the struggles that I had faced in trying to help my student teacher to understand what was involved in planning because much of the knowledge that I used during this process had become intuitive. I recalled how, at the start of his practicum, my student teacher found the planning process difficult. He did not have teaching experience or knowledge of the students and the classroom context to draw upon. As my student teacher gained experience teaching, however, he began to use his knowledge of the students, the classroom, and his expanding repertoire of instructional strategies in his planning process. On the basis of this experience, I wondered what my role could best have been. In addition, I was dissatisfied with the approach that I had taken to working with my student

teacher, as I believed that I could have done more to help facilitate a smoother journey in his learning to teach. At the end of the practicum, as I reflected on my experiences as a cooperating teacher, my concern about how I could better help student teachers in the future served as the catalyst for my decision to conduct a study on student teachers' planning experiences in the practicum. I hoped that the study would help me to find more fruitful ways in which to enhance student teachers' professional growth.

Summary of the Uncoverings and My Reflections

In this chapter I summarize the uncoverings of this study and my reflections on these. In hermeneutic terms, uncoverings are the unexpected dimensions or surprises that surface in our findings. They are the response to our inquiry (Packer & Addison, 1989).

Other Researchers' Findings

Chapter 1 presented findings from research literature which (a) delineated the salient differences between the planning processes of experienced teachers and student teachers, and (b) described how student teachers' approach to planning evolves over time. There were salient differences between the planning processes of experienced and student teachers. Experienced teachers use their knowledge of students, their prior teaching experience, and their extensive repertoire of instructional strategies when planning. In contrast, at the start of the practicum, student teachers approach planning with a limited knowledge of the students, the subject matter, classroom procedures, and teaching techniques. A significant difference found between

the planning of experienced and student teachers was that experienced teachers do not follow a Tyler (1949) or rational ends-means model of planning. Instead, experienced teachers begin their planning with a consideration of activities that will meet instructional time requirements and materials and resources that are available. In contrast, student teachers begin their planning based on the objectives stated in curricular materials. This is due in large part to their limited knowledge of students, subject matter, classroom routines, and instructional strategies. However, as student teachers gain teaching experience, their planning reflects their expanding knowledge of children and the classroom context.

Through conducting a review of the literature I became familiar with what other researchers had reported about student teachers' planning. After reflecting on this literature and my own experience with student teachers' planning, I wanted to learn if the student teachers in my study would begin their practicum with views of planning similar to those described in these studies. Therefore, I decided to focus the first interviews on the student teachers' pre-practicum conceptions of planning and their view of the role planning played in students' learning.

Pre-Practicum View of Planning

What do student teachers view as the purpose of planning and its role in students' learning?

The student teachers' views about the purpose of planning and its role in students' learning were similar to what other researchers had found (Bullough,

1987; Goodman, 1985; McNeely & Mertz, 1990; Sardo-Brown, 1993; Westerman, 1991). In my study, all six student teachers' pre-practicum ideas about planning centered around meeting curricular objectives and the selection of learning activities that would reflect the students' successful accomplishment of them. What was uncovered in these findings was the dramatic change in their thinking about planning and teaching when contrasted with the ideas they expressed in the previous cohort year. In my preparation for the first interview during the practicum I had assumed, based on my examination of their previous year's cohort reflection papers and cohort interviews, that the student teachers' views of planning were centered around their concerns with pupils' learning needs. The data from the previous cohort year reflected their preoccupation with modifying their instructional approaches to meet the various needs and interests of their students and with planning lessons that were both interesting and meaningful. As I studied the pre-practicum interview transcripts, I wondered what had led to this dramatic change of focus in the student teachers' thinking about planning and teaching. How had apparently student-centered student teachers come to be preoccupied with objectives and accountability?

I re-examined my personal research journal in the hope of finding evidence that might help me better understand what had led to this change in their thinking about planning. I had recorded my reflections after my initial contact with the student teachers, two weeks prior to the start of the practicum. I discovered that all six student teachers had expressed some feelings of uncertainty and nervousness about the upcoming practicum. In particular, three

student teachers claimed to feel some relief that they did not have to begin before the official starting date. As the practicum was so close at hand, I believe that planning lessons was at the forefront of their minds. The student teachers had had several opportunities to plan and implement lessons with small groups and individual students and to plan and teach an entire science unit in their course work the previous year. Having had a variety of planning and teaching experiences, they were acquainted with the processes involved. In addition, as part of their course work planning assignments, they had had to develop lesson plans that reflected the learner objectives stated in the Program of Studies. I believe that the student teachers' in-depth experience with planning from the previous cohort year provided them with a concrete and familiar place from which to begin their thinking about planning for the practicum. In addition, they wanted to appear in control and capable to both their cooperating teachers and pupils.

The following interview excerpt highlights a cooperating teacher's satisfaction with and confidence in her student teacher's planning work as it reflected the learner objectives stated in the Program of Studies. Susan's cooperating teacher commended her on her familiarity with the Program of Studies and her attention to learning goals in her lesson plans. Her cooperating teacher viewed this as an area of strength:

> I think she's really gone through the Program of Studies, and she's very aware of what needs to be taught and her lesson plans are great. (Margaret, Cooperating Teacher, Interview 1, Oct. 10/95, p. 3)

It would appear that this student teacher's approach to lesson planning served to reassure her cooperating teacher that she was familiar with the learner objectives in the Program of Studies and that she had selected instructional activities which reflected this knowledge.

By starting their planning with the selection of learner objectives, the student teachers had a concrete and practical way to begin to think about planning in a classroom where they had limited knowledge of the students and the context. As well, it provided a sense of purpose and direction to their planning in the practicum classroom.

Despite the differences between the planning processes of experienced and student teachers as described in Chapter 1, I believe that these six student teachers demonstrated needs similar to those of experienced teachers. At the start of the practicum, they needed to have a practical and effective way to cope with the complexities of learning to teach. Planning around objectives enabled the student teachers to have a sense of purpose to their actions as well as a feeling of being in control. As was mentioned earlier, Ben-Peretz (1975) offered a similar explanation as to what experienced teachers have described as the purpose of planning: the need to provide themselves with both control and ownership over what happens in the classroom.

The findings from the pre-practicum interviews help to illuminate the benefit of providing student teachers with the opportunity to articulate their ideas about planning early in the practicum. This could inform cooperating teachers of their current planning needs and concerns. More importantly, it could provide

student and cooperating teachers with a common language with which to begin their planning discussions. If student teachers are provided with the opportunity to discuss their thoughts about planning with their cooperating teachers, it may encourage them to voice their questions and concerns and support their professional growth.

Looking back at my own knowledge of student teachers' planning gained from my examination of the literature and from my own experience as a cooperating teacher, I recalled the way that I had supported and even encouraged their use of the Tyler (1949) model of planning. At the time I believed that this model offered them a concrete, step-by-step method by which to plan their lessons. However, what the findings helped to clarify for me both as a cooperating teacher and as a researcher was that this model of planning did not emphasize the interests and needs of the students or the nature of the classroom. Upon reflection, I realized that perhaps it would be more fruitful, during discussions about planning, to use this model in conjunction with examples and suggestions about ways that student teachers could plan activities that would enable them to focus more on the students' responses and less on their intended content of the lesson. Another important area to consider is the student teachers' familiarity with the content of the lesson to be planned. If student teachers begin their planning with a new or unfamiliar topic this may impede their ability to focus on students' responses as their attention will be on the content of the lesson.

Student Teachers' Expectations of Cooperating Teachers' Role In Planning

What are the student teachers' expectations of the cooperating teachers' role in their planning?

Student teachers' expectations of the cooperating teachers' role in their planning was also an important area to examine, as student teachers with the support and guidance of their cooperating teachers are expected to demonstrate knowledge of subject matter and program of studies, set appropriate objectives for learning, develop lesson plans and a unit plan, attempt to meet the individual needs of the students, use a variety of resources, and form a personal philosophy of education (University of Alberta's Field Experiences Handbook,1994).

During the pre-practicum interviews, the student teachers were very specific about what they wanted or hoped for from their cooperating teachers. This surprised me, as I had never considered that student teachers would have such a specific "wish list." I had assumed that cooperating teachers would know best what to offer student teachers and that student teachers would accept and appreciate their judgement.

As related in Chapter 4, some of the student teachers wanted specific examples of completed lesson plans that had met with the cooperating teacher's approval in the past. What they in fact received from cooperating teachers varied from one person to another (information about what units they would teach and when, general teaching ideas, etc.), but all of the student

teachers expressed relief and appreciation for whatever their teachers told them or gave them. Whatever information or ideas cooperating teachers gave to student teachers seemed to help reduce the uncertainty of the practicum assignment and to provide a focus for their attention and activity. Certainly, none of the student teachers expressed disappointment that the cooperating teachers failed to give them examples of approved, completed lesson plans.

Early or Gradual Planning

For their first experiences of teaching and planning, two of the student teachers were asked to jump into the pool at the deep end and four were introduced more gradually from the shallow end. Of the two student teachers with the "deep end" experiences, one was uncomfortable and uncertain during her preparation but everything worked out all right. The second student teacher was not as lucky. The instructional method she chose to use for the assigned content was not what the cooperating teacher had had in mind. This created confusion, awkwardness, and self-doubt for the student teacher at this early point in the practicum experience and in the relationship with the cooperating teacher. As well, it illustrated a problem in communication of expectations between the cooperating teacher and student teacher. This event serves to remind us how easy it can be to underestimate the complexity of what might seem to be "a simple lesson." Student teachers with the more gradual introductions to teaching and planning, as reported in Chapter 5 appeared to have more time to build their self-confidence, their relationship with the teacher, and their knowledge of the students, resources, and classroom routines.

Growth in Teaching and Planning

The student teachers' preoccupation or topics changed with the progress of the practicum. At the pre-practicum interviews their focus was on planning lessons that reflected the goals of learning stated in the program of studies and which used activities that would show pupils' successful attainment of these objectives. During the early and middle periods of the practicum, the student teachers were concerned with pacing of lessons; setting appropriate criteria for students' performance; their limited knowledge of students' interests, prior learning, and capabilities; and their limited subject matter knowledge. Towards the end of the practicum, their discussions with me focused on their efforts to find materials and use instructional strategies that were better suited to the needs of their particular classes.

While experience in teaching and increasing knowledge of students contributed to student teachers' growth, so did the nature of the cooperating teachers' feedback. The student teachers' responses to cooperating teachers' feedback were often mentioned in interviews. The following interview excerpt says what many student teachers hope for from their cooperating teachers:

> Mostly just I guess advice, like being able to help out, how to approach things, what things I have to think about. And to be supportive, like not overly critical but be able to help me out, but also be positive like support me, but also if I ask her questions I hope she's willing to help me out with any difficult things I face. (Pause) I hope she's enthusiastic about helping me too. (Barb, Interview 1, Sept. 8/95, p. 7)

As the practicum progressed and the student teachers became more autonomous or wished to become more autonomous, the cooperating teachers'

support for their experimentation or use of alternate instructional approaches became very important. Without this support, some of the student teachers were hesitant or unwilling to try teaching ideas which interested them. At all stages of the practicum, feedback that was positive and encouraging enhanced the relationship between cooperating and student teacher and helped the student teacher to be more responsive to constructive criticism.

Other Dimensions of Growth

While the student teachers' growth in teaching and planning was reflected in their changing discussion topics over the course of the practicum interviews, it was also mapped in the ways they spoke about three particular topics: student assessment, unexpected events, and materials and resources. Each of these dimensions of teaching and planning both prompted and reflected growth in important ways.

Student Assessment

From my examination of the pre-practicum interviews, it was apparent that the three student teachers who did discuss student assessment had yet to grasp the way in which this information could be used to plan future lessons or remediate gaps in pupils' learning. At this point in their growth these three student teachers did not appear to understand its role in the planning process. They appeared to view assessment as the only means of providing concrete proof that their students had attained those learner objectives selected from the program of studies. Over the course of the practicum, however, all six student teachers were involved in carrying out assessments of students' learning and

spontaneously discussed these during interviews and in their practicum reflection journals. What was revealed in the findings was that early in the practicum the student teachers were thinking about assessment; however, they found it difficult to carry out assessments while trying to deal with other more pressing demands (classroom management, time restraints). As the student teachers gained experience teaching and expanded their knowledge of students, they felt a strong desire to select assessment activities that were meaningful and authentic in demonstrating what their students had learned. The student teachers' experiences with assessment, however frustrating, appeared to make a substantial impact on their thinking about student assessment as they revealed a heightened consciousness about using assessment methods that were morally and pedagogically responsible. Their reflections about this showed their development of an ethics of teaching. This growing awareness of the potential impact that the outcomes of their approaches to assessment could have on students' well being appeared to influence some student teachers during their planning to consider carefully their choices. An important indicator of the student teachers' growth as teachers was their success in using the information gained from different assessment activities to plan future lessons or remediate any gaps in students' learning.

Unexpected Events

Prior to the start of the practicum, only one student teacher had discussed her experience with unexpected events and its influence on her approach to planning and teaching. However, during my examination of the student

teachers' practicum journal reflections, it was apparent that the occurrence of unexpected events significantly influenced their professional growth as reflected in their discussions about planning and teaching.

At the start of the practicum, the student teachers' knowledge of the rhythms of school life was limited to their own experiences as students and their formal training; consequently in their planning they did not consider the possibility that their plans would not proceed as intended. The student teachers' experiences with unexpected events appeared to cause them to reconsider their approach to planning and teaching. What was interesting to uncover were the different ways that the student teachers chose to respond to unexpected events. What was common to all six student teachers, however, was the fact that their planning processes all changed in some way to reflect an awareness that life in schools is unpredictable and that plans can change unexpectedly. Common to all six student teachers was the way in which these experiences with unexpected events helped them to better appreciate the need to approach planning with a responsive and flexible mindset.

Materials and Resources

At the beginning of the practicum the student teachers expressed an interest in the topic of materials and resources. They envisioned the practicum as an opportunity to expand their knowledge of and access to materials and resources and, more importantly, to learn how to use them expediently. The student teachers expected their cooperating teachers to be important sources of information for locating and using resources.

Earlier in Chapter 8, I discussed Bush's (1986) identification of student teachers' sources of knowledge as including themselves, textbooks, cooperating teachers, and university materials. Very early in the practicum, there was evidence of the student teachers' attempts during their planning to use materials beyond those available in the classroom. In some cases the student teachers reported their appreciation for having materials from university courses that were readily available and easily implemented in the classroom. However, some student teachers also experienced the frustration of having an unsuccessful lesson when using an instructional strategy from a methods course. What this experience appeared to help the student teachers realize was that taking a teaching idea and transforming it into a lesson is a complex process that needs to be carefully thought out:

> I like the prof's way of teaching and she had a lot of good ideas. Trying to make it real life. Trying to get them involved one way or another. I tried to do this, but it didn't really work yet, to have them do thumbs up or thumbs down. It should be more when it's a yes or no answer rather than when there's multiple answers. . . . If I try that again, I have to be a little more observant, make sure that they're participating. (Carol, Interview 3, Oct. 2/95, p. 9)

As the practicum progressed, the student teachers began to feel more adept at changing the suggestions offered in textbooks or other commercially prepared materials to suit both their planning needs and those of their students. This I believe was a significant indicator of their growth as teachers, as they were using their knowledge of the students and their expanding instructional repertoire to make decisions about the appropriateness of certain materials and

teaching suggestions. However in the subject of mathematics, particularly at the start of the practicum, the student teachers tended to follow the textbook's content as it was laid out without any consideration for the nature of the classroom or of the students' learning needs. Similarly when planning lessons with new or unfamiliar subject matter, the student teachers tended to initially follow the suggestions in the textbook or teacher's guide. However, as their knowledge of the class developed, they could quickly make necessary adjustments to the prescribed lessons to better suit their classrooms.

Of all the sources of knowledge used by the student teachers, the influence that the Program of Studies had on their planning was the most predominant. At the start of the practicum the student teachers used the goals of learning in the program of studies to give them a place to start their planning. As they gained teaching experience, they were more conscientious about adapting materials to suit the learning needs of their students:

> A couple of times when I've read the thing that I have to teach and they don't give them enough questions, or it's not emphasized enough in the unit, or it's not enough questions for them to just do for that day. . . that's usually when I'll throw in a quiz or I'll do more oral work in class and we'll just work through it orally. (Lynn, Interview 10, Nov. 23/95, p. 9)

In addition, the student teachers demonstrated their concern with being accountable by selecting resources and learning activities that reflected the learner objectives in the program of studies:

> And so I'm trying to make more of an effort to see if the lesson I'm teaching actually does fit into the Program of Studies . . . . I just want to sit down and see, OK, can I find an objective in here that's actually in the Program of Studies? (Lynn, Interivew 8, Nov. 9/95, p. 6)

The student teachers' dramatically increased sophistication in choosing or modifying materials and resources was a significant indicator of their growth as teachers. As the student teachers gained teaching experience and self-confidence, they were more inclined to seek out materials and other sources of information to use in their planning beyond those available in the classroom. The student teachers began to show their growth as teachers by their ability to trust in themselves to make the most appropriate choices for the students' needs rather than to accept what was suggested in a teacher's guide or in other commercially prepared materials.

Reflections at the End of My Research Story

I am writing this last chapter in the same month when I began to collect data for this study a year ago. Little did I know that the experience of following six student teachers for an extensive period of time (three months) would affect me in such a profound and lasting manner. A significant characteristic of hermeneutic inquiry is that the researcher, as a result of the research process, should have his or her understanding transformed. Having the opportunity to trace six student teachers' growth in their approach to planning over the course of a practicum has provided me with some answers to the question that propelled my journey. As well, this experience has also left me with new questions and concerns to consider in the future. How can I use the knowledge that I have gained from these uncoverings to better support my own student teachers' growth as teachers? To begin with, I would adopt the role of attentive

listener. From the start of the practicum I would show my student teachers that I am very interested in finding out their ideas about planning and teaching. This knowledge would place me in a better position to offer support in their development of those aspects of planning and teaching that are of most pressing concern to them. The manner in which I respond to the student teachers' planning concerns would have an effect on our future relationship, so I would be careful to demonstrate my respect and appreciation for their honesty and courage in placing their fears out in the open.

From my previous experiences with student teachers, I know that I have a tendency to want to protect them and structure their learning environment to ensure that they have successul teaching experiences. However I have realized upon reflection that as a mentor I need to encourage them to take risks in their planning and teaching and let them know that I will be there to support them in their times of difficulty. It is when lessons don't work that student teachers have the opportunity to develop a keener appreciation of the significant role of any dimension that was missing or overlooked.

Another personal revelation from the findings was that I should not consider myself as the sole source of knowledge. My student teachers have much to offer by way of teaching ideas and creativity. I would like to find ways that would encourage them to experiment with alternate instructional strategies and to seek a style of teaching that was compatible with their needs as learners. I must try to avoid jumping to conclusions about student teachers and appreciate that different backgrounds, personal strengths, and school

experiences will affect their approach to planning. My intent as a cooperating teacher is not to produce a carbon copy of myself but to encourage my student teachers to be independent and unafraid to try out new ideas or use other sources of knowledge in their teaching. Most of all, I would want them to learn, not just specific things, but to learn how to keep learning from their teaching experiences.

I will still encourage my student teachers to follow a traditional model of planning initially to provide them with a concrete place from which to start thinking about planning in the practicum. However at the same time I will encourage them to try to select content and use activities (class discussions, personal response writing) that will enable them to focus more on the students' responses than on the content of the lesson.

As I prepare for my student teacher's arrival, I would spend time in compiling notes which list some of the more pertinent details of classroom life (classroom routines, brief information on each student, timetable, seating plan, timeline for teaching responsibilities) to help ease their transition into my classroom. I would also like to think that I will not repeat the mistake that I have made with my previous student teachers--that of assigning a lesson to plan within days of their entry into the practicum. After reflecting on how this affected the growth of some student teachers in my study, I was able to appreciate that taking a more gradual approach, where I would first work together with my student teachers to co-plan and/or co-teach lessons, would enhance their feelings of self-confidence in their abilities as teachers and hopefully our

relationship as colleagues.

As I reflect on these experiences and how they have transformed me as a cooperating teacher and researcher, I still have some questions that I believe would be worthwhile attending to in further inquiry. What can cooperating teachers and teacher educators do to better prepare student teachers to anticipate and deal with unexpected events? It is not enough to suggest that student teachers be on guard for unexpected occurrences; what support could we offer as they plan that would assist them in their thinking about different ways to modify their lessons in response to the occurrence of an unexpected event? Student assessment plays a significant role in planning, yet how do we help student teachers understand this and seek to go beyond the more traditional pen and paper methods of assessment in shorter practicum placements? Is it fair to ask student teachers to assess students' learning early in the practicum while they are trying to deal with other more compelling demands on their attention? What should the cooperating teachers' role be at this time? Would it be better to wait until student teachers bring it up as a concern or when it appears that they are ready and able to change the focus of their attention from the content and classroom management? Would it be more beneficial to try to incorporate some of the student teachers' concerns during the early co-planned and co-taught lessons?

Finally, how can cooperating teachers be encouraged to support and encourage student teachers to develop their own approach to planning and their own teaching style without feeling that the students are being

compromised? What I have appreciated the most from this research experience is that student teachers are similar to students in classrooms in that they arrive full of dreams and hopes to be fulfilled. At the start of the practicum, student teachers tend to still envision themselves in the role of student and therefore need to be given the time and space to make the adjustment from student to teacher. The attitude that student teachers need to sink or swim, I feel, does both cooperating and student teachers a great injustice--it robs them of the opportunity to learn and grow from each other and develop a relationship that is built on mutual trust and support. Cooperating teachers need to be careful that they do not unconsciously, through their actions or in their feedback, leave student teachers with the impression that to ask questions or to raise concerns is a sign of being incompetent. Student teachers are only just beginning their journey as teachers, and it is crucial that they understand that we understand that the practicum is only the beginning and not the end.

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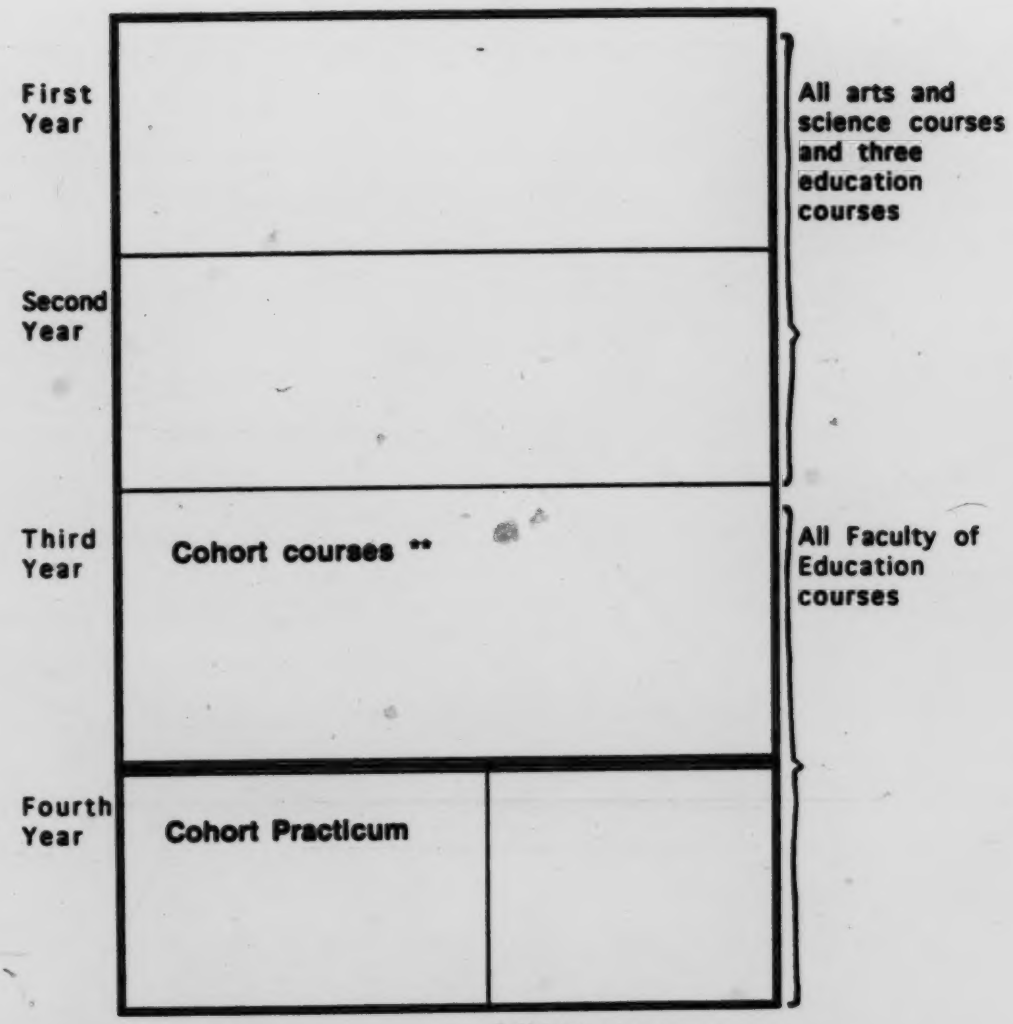
B.Ed. Program *



*This is a simplified overview of the B.Ed. Program. The cohort was in the third and fourth year during this research study.

** See the next page for a description of the cohort courses and data collected

Two Year Cohort Program Timeline
1994-95 and 1995-96

• Student teachers remained as an intact group for three courses in Term I Year Three, three courses in Term Two Year Three, and for the practicum in Term One Year Four

* Assignments and activities that the student teachers participated together in as a cohort group

1994-95

Year Three Term I

• Language Learning Course
• Environmental Studies Course
• Principles of Teaching Course

* reflective writing assignment #1
* visitation to school to meet pen pals
* Cohort Research Interview #1
* reflective assignment #2

1994-95

Year Three Term II

• Writing (focus) Course
• Science Course
• Instructional Methods Course

1995-96

Year Four Term I

Practicum Term

• Practicum (12-weeks)
• Seminar (once-a-week)

* weekly interviews
* reflection journals
* lesson plans and unit plans
* personal view of teaching assignment

* classroom observations report
* reflective writing assignment #3
* personal philosophy of teaching assignment
* Cohort Research Interview #2
* student teaching portfolios

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Dear _____,

My name is Annabella Branco and I am a graduate student in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. For my doctoral research I would like to study how student teachers undertake and think about planning during the practicum.

Should you wish to participate, our work would entail pre- and post-conferencing about one lesson per week during the practicum. When possible and appropriate, I would also like to observe the lesson we conference about. Our conferences would be audio-taped. In addition, I would like to be able to examine and or collect artifacts (e.g., lesson plans, unit plans, journal reflections) as they pertain to our planning discussions. Our meetings would be scheduled at your convenience.

In this study your identity would be protected through the use of a pseudonym. I would personally transcribe all tapes of our interviews and would be the sole person who has access to these tapes. You would have the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Thank you for considering my request to participate in this study. Can you please fill out the attached form indicating your decision regarding this matter and return it to the address below. If you have further questions about the study, please telephone me at 471-5103.

Yours truly,

Annabella Branco

7560-110 Avenue
Edmonton, Alta.
T5B OA4

COOPERATING TEACHER CONSENT

Dear _____,

My name is Annabella Branco and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. From my own experiences of working with preservice teachers I have become intrigued with the question of how one learns to teach. For my research I would like to examine the planning experiences of student teachers. I hope that the report on my study may enable readers to understand growth in planning from the student teachers' perspectives. I am writing to ask whether you would agree to having your student teacher participate in my study.

If your student teacher participates, I would be present in your classroom to observe her teach one lesson per week. This would facilitate more meaningful discussion in our pre- and post-conferencing about the lesson. I wish to study how the experiences of planning for lessons may change for the student teacher over the course of the practicum. I also hope that I might occasionally have audio-taped informal conversations with you and that you might tell me about the kind of direction or feedback you usually give to the student teacher.

Your student teacher has expressed interest in participating and I have assured her that the weekly conferences would be scheduled at her convenience. In the research report, all identities (schools, teachers, student teachers, students) would be protected as pseudonyms would be used. Analyses would be in the form of essays tracing the changes in student teachers' approaches to planning. I would personally transcribe all tapes of conversations and would be the sole person who has access to these tapes. You would have the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Thank you for considering my request to participate in this study. Can you please fill out the attached form indicating your decision regarding this matter and return it to the address below. Please telephone me at 471-5103 if you have further questions about this study.

Yours truly,

Annabella Branco

7560-110 Avenue
Edmonton, Alta.
T5B OA4

Consent Form

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Phone _____

I **DO AGREE** to participate in Annabella Branco's study on the planning experiences of preservice teachers.

Date _____ Signature _____

OR

I **DO NOT AGREE** to participate in Annabella Branco's study on the planning experiences of preservice teachers.

Date _____ Signature _____